**"STRIVE, ARRIVE and COME ALIVE -**

**(DON'T TAKE A DIVE) IN '95!"**

or

"WHY 'DISCIPLES' DROP OUT!"

**TEXT**: John 6:66-67

**THESIS**: To analyze the issue of disciple drop-out.

**INTRO**:

**A.** Jesus had the problem of "DISCIPLE DROPOUTS" (text) and so did the Apostle Paul.

Gal. 4:8-9

8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.

9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, where unto ye desire again to be in bondage?

**B.** While the "DISCIPLE DROP OUT" syndrome is not new, it is still discouraging and often perplexing. Why is it that folks who apparently had a zeal for the Lord, lived for God, had a good testimony, and even served Him for some time suddenly (or gradually) drop out? I believe I can answer that question after nearly 40 years of being saved and 35 years in the ministry...

**I. SPIRITUAL DEFECTS:**

**A.** Lack of Character:

1. Some folks failed to develop character before they were saved, and this failure produced defeat after they were saved.

2. They were not honest, diligent, faithful, punctual, considerate, or loyal, so they never got the victory, and it finally overcame them.

**ILLUS**: While we become "new creatures" after salvation, we bring our flesh and many of our old character traits into the new life. These character defects, if not dealt with, spell disaster and defeat later.

The classic, though tragic, example in the NEW TESTAMENT is Demas. He is spoken of as a "fellow-laborer" in Phil.1:24, on a par with Luke in Col. 4:14 but in II Tim. 4:10 Paul says "Demas hath forsaken me..."

**B.** Carnal Priorities:

1. They failed to "consider the cost" of becoming a believer, i.e., loss of friends, popularity, position, etc.

2. They preferred comfort to conviction; when their maturity demanded more sacrifice they backed away.

**ILLUS**: When Jesus spoke of heaven and performed miracles the multitudes followed Him, but when He began speaking of commitment they dropped out!

**C.** Agitation Vs. Submission:

1. When the Word of God convicted them, instead of submitting they smarted; instead of yielding they yelped!

2. When the "kitchen got heated up" they bailed out!

**ILLUS**: The old Sword of the Spirit slices and slashes when preached with power and wounds hurt before healing begins.

II Tim. 4:3-4

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

**D.** Blessing Oblivious:

1. Some lose their love and respect for God's man and forget the past blessings they have derived from his ministry.

2. They began to see the man-of-God's flaws instead of focusing on his call.

Acts 15:39-40

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

**II. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT:**

**A.** Inconsistency:

1. They have no devotional life to sustain them when the going gets rough.

2. They have lived off other’s convictions and not their own or cannot discern between preferences and convictions.

**ILLUS**: I PREFER that men not wear long hair and have a biblically based conviction about that for myself, but it is not a "fundamental of the faith" nor would I break fellowship with another believer over that issue. I WILL NOT permit someone in the pulpit with long hair.

**B.** Hypocrisy:

1. They have been living a lie; pretending to be spiritual when in reality they are carnal and have not dealt with carnal appetites.

2. Every believer needs 3 vital ingredients for their spiritual health:

a. Diet: intake of sound doctrine.

b. Fresh air: devotional life (prayer, Word and personal walk with God).

c. Exercise: living out what they take in: soul-winning, hospitality mercy, teaching, giving, etc.

**C.** Weak Foundation:

1. Emotion and excitement are not grounds for spiritual stability.

2. They are moved by a "dynamic speaker" or by promotions or entertainment instead of a consistent walk with the Lord.

3. They have a carnal appetite instead of a spiritual hunger.

**ILLUS**: These are the Christians who hop from church to church based on the personality of the preacher or his flamboyance, new programs, etc. They prefer "Christian music" over preaching, entertainment over service.

**III. SPIRITUAL DISASTER:**

**A.** Weary in Well-doing:

1. The concept of growing "weary in well doing" is presented in 2 places in the NEW TESTAMENT (Gal. 6:9 and II Th. 3:13).

2. It is recognized by God that it is possible to get tired of always living right and serving God - but the alternative is living wrong and serving self, which is dead-end.

Gal. 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

**ILLUS**: The believer must constantly keep before him the goal of pleasing God and facing His Savior at the end of his life. God gives rewards as an incentive to "faint not." No doubt very few would continue to work at their job if there was no paycheck at the end of the week! This is the difference between work and service! Work wearies, service stimulates. Love must be the motivation.

**B.** Illegitimate Children:

I John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

1. Those who drop out without conviction or chastisement are spiritual bastards.

Heb. 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

2. Those who leave without chastisement and stop serving without punishment are illegitimate children.

**CONCL**: Some will no doubt leave us in 1995; they will "TAKE A DIVE IN '95" instead of attempting to "STRIVE, ARRIVE and COME ALIVE IN '95!" Don't let it happen to YOU.

If any one or more of the above points apply to you, why not "set thine house in order" this first Sunday of the New Year?