

TOO MANY CHIEFS...NOT ENOUGH INDIANS!

or

THE FUTURE OF YOUR CHURCH

TEXT: Nehemiah 3:5 *And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but **their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.***

THESIS: To show the natural course of spiritual decline which will take place in any ministry unless basic biblical principles are jealously guarded & implemented.

INTRO.: A. I look at my past 31+ years of ministry here and rejoice that I have been able to watch a whole generation grow up. I have married the young people who now have children of their own. Kids who once were students in our Christian school now have kids who are students in our Christian school. Former bus kids are now members & their kids work on our buses! Praise the Lord! But it dawned on me recently that while I may bury this generation, I will not marry the next generation! So this morning I want to issue a warning & hopefully leave a legacy that you will follow after I am gone. I especially want the young couples & teens to tune in today.

B. Everything goes through cycles & churches are no exception. But there is a grave danger that w/age maturity will be replaced w/petrification or fossilization; that this ministry will cease to grow & stagnate instead. I want to give you the knowledge & biblical principles to keep that from happening.

ILLUS.: There is a law in science called the **Law of Entropy** which states that everything will deteriorate, decay & die w/out new energy being put into the system. God gives us the information & the energy to keep this church from dying till He comes & takes it to heaven... This is illustrated graphically in our text. While Nehemiah & the common people were rebuilding the wall, **"Their nobles put not their necks to the work..."**

I. NATURAL GROWTH CYCLE:

A. From Seedlings to Fruit Bearers:

1. God has designed nature to **"reproduce after its kind"** when it comes to maturity.
2. A fruit tree is planted, grows, matures & then produces fruit & **will continue to do so till it dies.**

B. From Child to Productive Adult:

1. God has set up a system whereby humans go thru cycles: infants, children, young adults, adults & the aged.
2. Biblically there was no retirement age, men & women were **considered productive till they died!**

ILLUS.: Old age was not considered negatively in the Bible. God continued to use Moses till He was done with him & then he died! Caleb asked Joshua for one more mountain to conquer as his 85th birthday present. The proverbs speak of the gray head as synonymous w/wisdom.

II. CHRISTIAN GROWTH CYCLE:

A. Salvation (infancy) - everything is new, exciting; he learns Bible books & basics.

B. Growth (youth) - enthusiastic, gets involved in bus min., S.S. teacher, etc.

C. Maturity (young adult) - settles into the ministry & becomes a blessing to folks, most productive years

D. Stagnation (adult) - continues to work out of duty & responsibility.

ILLUS.: This is the dangerous stage: he has lost his excitement; keeps his bus route but doesn't visit regularly; still goes soul-winning even if half-hearted; prepares his S.S. class but doesn't prepare w/enthusiasm anymore; still sings special music but has lost a sense of ministry (especially if he or she has real talent!).

E. Respectability (aged):

1. He is well-known in the church & may be older & more affluent.
2. He is given (or elected) a place of leadership & **begins to substitute his leadership activities for the work of the ministry - he has become a nobleman!**
3. He leaves the real work to the commoners! He has become a **chief!**

Neh.3:5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

4. He often becomes involved in "ministries" that are not people oriented; he will fight against socialism, Communism, abortion, homosexuality, etc.

ILLUS.: He is now respected, a leader, & is still "involved" in church work. But his new "ministry" is not nearly as exciting as soul-winning, building a bus route, training others in S.S., bringing folks down the aisle he has personally won to Christ. **God deliver us from "Bigshots" in the church who want to "run the show" but never build the work!** God help every deacon, S.S. worker, bus worker, etc. to stay after souls, to bring folks to Christ & His church, to see that poor boys & girls are just as important as affluent adults! That bus kids are just as precious as church kids!

III. BIBLICAL GROWTH CYCLE:

A. New & Old Do the Same Work:

1. No-one is exempt from the Lord's work.
2. The Great Commission wasn't just given to the new converts.
3. The rich people are to do the same work that the poor people do.
4. The educated people do the same work that the uneducated people do.

B. Leaders & Followers Do the Same Work:

1. Staff workers do the same work (& more) than non-staff workers do.
2. The noblemen do the same work the commoners do.

ILLUS.: Nehemiah was having trouble getting the walls built because of opposition from outside, but more importantly he had internal disunity: **"Their nobles put not their necks to the work..."**

Doing God's work is not just for a few poor, uneducated, ignorant people who haven't gotten smart enough yet to become a noblemen or a chief! The administration is to work like the teachers work; the teachers are to work like the students work; the deacons are to work like the custodians work; the preacher is to work like the people work. There is no such thing as **"noblemen"** running the church while the commoners do the work. *(There is no such thing as a "board run" church in the Bible either! Let the Pastor, the deacons & the people work together to build the work!)*

C. Noblemen & Commoners Do the Same Work:

1. Beware creating noblemen!
2. Don't elect non-workers to leadership positions.
3. Don't just place the educated or wealthy into positions of leadership.

ILLUS.: All the good soul-winning, preacher-producing schools that have become neo or liberal failed in this area. D.L. Moody wasn't formally educated but founded a great school, but the intellectuals ruined it. Bob Jones, Sr. wasn't an educated preacher, but a great man of God. The school was turned over to the intellectuals & snobs w/culture but little of Dr. Bob Sr.'s zeal or soul-winning emphasis. Now they don't even believe the KJB is God's Word! (Ask them!)

Chas. H. Spurgeon had a church full of people in an auditorium that seated 5000 w/standing room only, 3 services every week! Over the years the church lost his soul-winning zeal & they cut the bldg. down to seat 1700 & a few years back they were running about 200-300! Last week we had a lady here from London & she never heard of the Metropolitan Tabernacle or C.H. Spurgeon!!! He started a college & an orphanage. They are gone too! What happened?

The Bigshots took over & **"Their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord."**

4. Keep soul-winning the main ministry in the church.
5. Don't change Bibles!

My creed: I believe the AV1611 King James Bible is the inspired, inerrant, infallible, indestructible and preserved Word and words of the Living God!

6. Don't pursue respectability at the expense of zeal.
7. Don't worry about image over spirituality (or "symbolism over substance" - Limbaugh).

CONCL.: It *CAN & WILL* happen unless you are aware of the forces at work & this simple principle. It *DOESN'T HAVE TO HAPPEN HERE* if you safeguard the ministry of Faith Baptist Church by the above procedures. **"THE FUTURE OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH" is** not in my hands - it is in your hands! (This is true for YOUR CHURCH as well!) YOU are responsible for its well-being!