

Has the Candlestick been Removed?
(Rev. 2:1-7)

I. The Crisis Confronted...

- A. Some years ago at the height of the struggle between liberals and conservatives over the heart and soul of the Southern Baptist Convention...W. A. Criswell preached a message called, "Whether we live or die."
- B. It was a call to Southern Baptists to commitment to the inerrancy and authority of Scripture...to return to our roots...to defend things we never dreamed we'd have to defend.
- C. It was a warning about what would become of us as a denomination if we didn't.
- D. Immanuel Baptist Church was planted by God 38 years ago to be a light in Marion.
- E. 2 years ago we were averaging 40-42 in Sunday School.
- F. We're now averaging 30-32.
- G. We can no longer sit around pretending everything is fine or one day we will look around and it won't be 30 in Sunday School...it will be 15.

II. The Clues Connected..

- A. In his book, "Kingdom principles for Church Growth," Dr. Gene Mims said that 90% of churches that go into decline ultimately die.
- B. The survivors have a handful of zealots who refuse to let that happen.
- C. God has a plan for church growth.
- D. If we decide to work His plan, even Satan can't stop us.

IV. The Course Corrected.

- A. What does a turn around church do?
 - 1. It identifies the people it can reach..
 - 2. It determines where those people are.
 - 3. It goes after them.
- B. That doesn't mean it will be easy.
 - 1. Satan wants to stop us.
 - 2. But we must persevere.
- C. There will always be people who will say..."We can't do it."
- D. The challenge is to catch the vision...
- E. You may not be able to do everything...but you can always bring someone to church.
- F. We must decide our church's direction...and commit as a body to get moving in that direction...whatever it may be.
- G. Whether or not we want to face the future...the future is coming.

V. Conclusion

- A. If you want this church to survive...you can't just sit there.
- B. If we do nothing...its not a matter of what our future will be...it's only a matter of when.
- C. As Dr. Criswell said years go..."It's a matter of whether we live or die.