



SURVIVING TO THRIVING:

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S INSIGHT ON GROWING HEALTHIER CHURCHES

A PUBLICATION OF RAY REYNOLDS RAP

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Workbook by Ray Reynolds, Ph.D.

RAY REYNOLDS RAP PUBLICATIONS

Surviving To Thriving:

The Apostle Paul's Insight on Growing Healthier Churches

Introduction: The apostle Paul seems to be somewhat frustrated with some of the churches in the New Testament. Specifically, we can see this in his letters to Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and others. Many churches were lacking maturity and spiritual growth! The Hebrew writer also dealt with this problem when he said, *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (**Hebrews 5:12-14**). If we are the body of Christ... we need to stop thinking about surviving and actually start thriving! Paul outlines at least 12 steps to becoming a thriving church.

Discussion:

STEP #1 – Internalize – **I Corinthians 10:1-13**

- A. The Leaders Must Internalize The Word of God (Elders, Deacons, etc.)
 - Growing spiritually every day!!! – **II Peter 3:18, Acts 20:18**
- B. The Members Must Internalize The Word of God (Regular Bible Study)
- C. The Teachers Must Internalize The Word of God (Instruct) - **II Timothy 4:1-5**
- D. The Families Must Internalize The Word of God (Family Devotionals)

STEP #2 – Familiarize (Identify) – **I Corinthians 12:12-31**

- A. You Need To Familiarize Yourself With The Leadership (Elders, Deacons, Ministers)
- B. You Need To Familiarize Yourself With The Membership (All members!)
- C. You Need To Familiarize Yourself With The Ministries (What can you do?)
- D. You Need To Familiarize Yourself With Your Talents (Find them, use them, etc.)
 - **Matthew 25, John 15:1-8, Ephesians 4:8, Romans 12:1-2**

STEP #3 – Organize – **I Corinthians 14:26-40**

- A. The Worship of the Church Should Be Organized (Structured but not mechanical)
 - **John 4:34, Acts 2:42, I Corinthians 11:17-32**
- B. The Teachers of the Church Should Be Organized (Prepared, Accountable, etc.)
- C. The Ministries of the Church Should Be Organized (Deacons, What are you doing?)
 - Organization and accountability are essential in church growth!
- D. The Life of the Church Should Be Organized (Home life, spirituality, etc.)

STEP #4 – Prioritize – **Galatians 4:1-11** (born again, new life, don't go back!!!)

- A. We Must Prioritize Our Life (Seek God first, and his kingdom – **Matthew 6:33**)
- B. We Must Prioritize Our Goals (Individual, Church, etc. – Set them and attain them)
 - **Hebrews 6:1-3, II Peter 3:18, Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16**
- C. We Must Prioritize Our Work (Secular work or church work – both, but #1 more!!!)
- D. We Must Prioritize Our Prospects (Ten people we want to save - **Luke 19:10**)

RAY REYNOLDS RAP PUBLICATIONS

STEP #5 – Spiritualize – **Galatians 5:16-26**

- A. We Must Spiritualize The Leadership (If they are not, we need to encourage them)
- **I-II Timothy, Titus, Philemon**
- B. We Must Spiritualize The Membership (Walk in the spirit, pray, study, etc.)
- C. We Must Spiritualize The Youth (All of our young people are starving for the Word)
- D. We Must Spiritualize The Worship (Let God's Spirit join us here, Bible class, etc.)

STEP #6 – Scripturalize – **Galatians 6:1-10**

- A. If We Are Scriptural We Will Restore The Erring (Do you notice the erring?)
- We should pray for them! – **Acts 1-3, Matthew 7:7-16, Galatians 6:1-2**
- B. If We Are Scriptural We Will Teach The Lost (We must also practice it!)
- C. If We Are Scriptural We Will Sow The Seed (An unfruitful Christian is no Christian!)
- D. If We Are Scriptural We Will Visit The Needy (When is the last time you visited?)

STEP #7 – Evangelize – **Ephesians 3:14-21**

- A. Evangelistic Congregations Are Filled With The Holy Spirit
- Many of us do not even know Him. – Does He fill you? Strengthen?
- B. Evangelistic Congregations Are Filled With Faith (Have you added to your faith?)
- **II Peter 1:5-11, Romans 10:17, I Timothy 2:2**
- C. Evangelistic Congregations Are Filled With Love (God, Church, Self, Neighbor, etc.)
- D. Evangelistic Congregations Are Filled With Knowledge (Bible knowledge)

STEP #8 – Emphasize – **Ephesians 4:1-16** (To build up we need to emphasize the right things)

- A. We Need To Emphasize Godliness (Characteristics of Jesus, Paul, etc.)
- **I Timothy 2:2, 10, II Peter 3:11, Philippians 2:5**
- B. We Need To Emphasize Unity (No divisions, no selfishness, no pride, etc.) – 4:3
- Notice how the church is supposed to work together in all aspects of ministry!
- C. We Need To Emphasize Jesus (Not so much of the church, more of Jesus)
- D. We Need To Emphasize Edification (Build up, do not tear down, grace, peace, etc.)

STEP #9 – Visualize – **Ephesians 5:8-21**

- A. We Need To Have A Vision For Our Lives (Where am I going? What am I doing?)
- B. We Need To Have A Vision For Our Future (Lack of vision – we perish)\
- **Proverbs 29:18, I Samuel 3:1, Hosea 4:6**
- C. We Need To Have A Vision For Our Congregation (Worship is even included here)
- What do visitors want? (Seating [80%], Time, Parking) – Follow up
- D. We Need To Have A Vision For Our Children (**Ephesians 5:22-6:4**)

STEP #10 – Realize – **I Thessalonians 1:1-10**

- A. We Need To Realize The Importance of Prayer (How many times in his books?)
- **I Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:6, James 5:13-16**
- B. We Need To Realize The Importance of Hard Work (Deacons, ladies, etc.)
- Teachers (IRA – Invite the mature to teach, Rotate, Appreciate), etc.
- C. We Need To Realize The Importance of Integrity (Standing up for something)
- D. We Need To Realize The Importance of Repentance (Staying faithful, etc.)

RAY REYNOLDS RAP PUBLICATIONS

STEP #11 – Liberalize – **I Thessalonians 2:1-9** (loosen up, relax, not so tense)

- A. We Must Liberalize Our Love (Our example – sympathize with others, help, barriers)
- **John 3:16, I John 3:16, I Corinthians 13, Matthew 22:37-39**
- B. We Must Liberalize Our Giving (We have got to do something about our giving!)
- One of the proofs of our maturity is our giving (**II Corinthians 8:4-6**).
- C. We Must Liberalize Our Work (Pursue hope, joy, and peace despite the trials)
- D. We Must Liberalize Our Life (Enjoy life and loosen up, don't be so uptight!)

STEP #12 – Stabilize – **I Thessalonians 5:11-22**

- A. Stable Congregations Recognize That God Is Holy (Therefore, we must be holy!)
- **I Peter 1:16, I Corinthians 3:16-17, Hebrews 12:14**
- B. Stable Congregations Recognize That Jesus Is Coming Again (Theme of entire book)
- Are you ready for Jesus to come again? Are you eager for His return or worried?
- C. Stable Congregations Recognize That The Holy Spirit Is Active (Do not quench!)
- D. Stable Congregations Recognize That Christians Are Submissive (Obey, etc.)

Conclusion: This outline only covers four of Paul's letters. If we ever hope to become spiritually mature churches we need to grow up! How will we ever grow up if we never learn and apply the Bible? Therefore, real change begins with me and you. Every child of God is a soldier and a student. Let's stop talking about surviving and start thriving!