

Churches seem to have some of the same attributes as people in many ways. Local churches, soon after their beginning, seem to develop a DNA of their own. They possess individual traits, personalities and attitudes just like people. Churches that let their purpose fade into a maintenance and survival mode will usually see apathy setting in, just like people. They begin losing hope and starting the slippery slope toward a slow agonizing death.

Most, if not all, local churches begin with wholesome spiritual intentions. However, sometimes, even early in what would normally be a move toward their prime, circumstances and a fear of failing initiate beginning phases of lost HOPE. No church or individual can survive long without an ongoing operational strategy that includes the continuous cultivation and maintaining of reasons to HOPE.

The good news, when churches see problems and challenges as opportunities and set goals focused on a divinely inspired HOPE with a well defined VISION, they live!!!

Churches digressing from hope to hopelessness are first noted in the 2nd and 3d chapters of Revelation.

- **Ephesus – Experienced fatigue and forgot its first love.**
- **Pergamum – Became careless about church discipline.**
- **Thyatira – Ignored internal conflict refusing to confront sin.**
- **Sardis – Lost its passion for a vision and rested on past accomplishments.**
- **Laodicea – Lost its influence because of its affluence.**

Five of the seven churches mentioned in these chapters, 71%, faced difficulty. This is approximately the percentage of churches at risk and declining in North America today. These churches are ineffective at making fresh new disciples while functioning with a serious lack of fruitfulness and hope.

“HOPE” is a very misunderstood word as we observe it in our modern English Bible translations, or when we use it as a speculative term in contemporary conversations. We might say things like, “We hope it doesn’t rain” when we are stating our desires with no thought of implementing the authority of FAITH mentioned in Hebrews 11:1.

The word “HOPE” as it was observed in the original Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic languages, implied declaration, much more than speculation. Hebrews 11:1 NIV should be understood to say: *“Now faith is confidence in what we (are declaring by implementing that faith) and assurance about what we do not see.*

We must first, each as a team player, pursue our specific calling. However we will never maintain solid vision driven hope by relying only on worthiness and abilities. Of course, we’re each awarded specific resources, natural talents and spiritual gifts. We must always remember, however, that our spiritually driven obedience and discipline will always take us much further than our talents and abilities alone ever would. A church body that forgets this is destined to fail.

More churches come to life with HOPE inspired VISION than by having resources.

Also read “*Tongue Authority*” www.skipelmore.com

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