

**Keeping the Church Alive #6**  
**Can You Endure It?**  
**By Russell Earl**

Nothing changes over night. If we want to help keep the church alive and strong as God intended, we must realize that it takes time. It's very seldom when anything good for the church happens very quickly. In the Old Testament we read of those who worked hard for years with little results. *Yet for many years You had patience with them, And testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets...* (Neh 9:30). When individuals sometimes "change over night" the change is rarely from the heart or long lasting.

Change for the good takes time. We must understand that. When work seems to be slow going it doesn't mean we aren't being profitable for the Kingdom of God. The good work of the Lord takes time to accomplish.

Many times we allow ourselves to set unrealistic goals. We perhaps say "by the end of the year we will lead 500 souls to Christ". When in reality we should have a goal that says "by the end of the year 500 souls will hear the gospel." Do you see the difference? We may not be able to realistically convince 500 souls in a year to obey Christ but we can give 500 souls the chance to hear the gospel.

We should strive to set smaller more realistic goals first before we try to achieve goals that could take years to accomplish. Prayer and thinking positive are two aspects that we should strive to keep. We should pray more about the work we are involved in and the goals we have set. We should then think positive about those goals. Worrying, doubting and second-guessing ourselves about our goals is not the type of attitude we should have. Christians should possess a "can-do" attitude.

To encourage each other we should review the work we have done. After you will be amazed at how much you have accomplished. *"Count your blessings, name them one by one and it will surprise you what the Lord has done."*

The measure of success is different in the church than that of the world. The world says it's black and white, either you succeed or fail. When it comes to spreading the gospel message, just because we haven't convinced hundreds or thousands of people to obey the gospel, that doesn't mean we have failed. We have goals that are different from the world. We are striving to spread the gospel message and those who are willing to obey are baptized in the name of Christ. However, we cannot force people to obey. It is our responsibility to spread the message and teach and encourage others to obey it, but if they decide not to, we have not failed. We present the message of God and the gift of Christ but it's up to the individual to obey. You could be the most eloquent teacher or preacher there is, but you will not convince everyone.

Therefore, let us remember that we should set realistic goals. We should work hard, pray hard and think positive so that they may be accomplished. Just as Paul reminded those in his time, *"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart"* (Gal 6:9).