



**bits from bob....**

**Almost a year – healthier or unhealthier?  
February 15, 2021**

We will soon mark the one-year anniversary of the start of the pandemic. What has happened in your life, your family, your church? What has been the impact of the pandemic? Let me ask specific questions. Are you now healthier or unhealthier? Physically, mentally, socially, financially? Are you in better shape or worse shape? Such questions are important.

Consider the questions in the spiritual realm.

- Are you healthier or unhealthier? Is your faith healthier or unhealthier? More or less active?
- Did the last year leave your church healthier or unhealthier?
- Did the last year leave your ministry healthier or unhealthier?
- Did the last year leave your mission work healthier or unhealthier?

Much has changed over the past year. The question remains. Healthier or unhealthier?

One way to describe health is to say that a person (or a church) can function normally with minimal outside assistance. Healthy Christians do what Christians do—in every situation. Healthy churches do what churches do—in every circumstance.

An older description of the church identified three activities of the church: evangelism, edifying (discipleship), and benevolence. We may wish to update the names of the categories, but healthy churches reach out to unbelievers, maintain internal connections that bring spiritual growth, and care for others.

What are the characteristics of a healthy Christian, church, ministry, or mission work? Many churches look at numbers – budgets, buildings, bodies; nickels, noses, clicks.

One study found that 60% of US churches either plateaued or declined in 2020. Exact numbers are not easy to extrapolate, but one thing seems certain – for most of us, COVID-19 changed everything. It is quite unlikely that online attendance or technology views are comparable to in-person attendance pre-pandemic.

Healthier or unhealthier? Functioning at the maximum, or at some lower level?

- More or less evangelism?
- More or less spiritual growth?
- More or less opportunities to demonstrate the spirit of Jesus?

I pray for healthy churches. I rejoice when I see churches that have done more in the last year than in the previous year. Many of those churches are churches on the mission field. More outreach, more time together online, more teaching, more interaction, more prayers, more caring for those with needs. Spiritual growth, baptisms, new outreach efforts initiated.

This would be a good week to get on track spiritually – personally, down at the church, in ministry, in missions. The future is unknown, but some analysts are saying that COVID-19 may be with us through most of 2021. The normal we knew before may not return soon.

Therefore, now is the time to recommit to spiritual health. Healthy people, healthy churches, grow. Let us not march in place for another year, let us not simply mark time. The world is waiting, perhaps more expectant and more receptive than in recent years.