

We believers are a meeting people. From the church's beginning on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after our Lord's resurrection, the believers have been gathered together as the church (Acts 2:41-45). We were saved to be the church, and as the church we gather continually and steadfastly. Although many Christians prefer to practice the Christian life individually, God's intention is that all the believers would meet together corporately.

Our meetings are living; that is, they are full of the enjoyment and expression of the divine life, which we as the children of God possess. Our meetings are focused on the truth; that is, we take the Bible and its revelation concerning the Triune God and His economy, the person and work of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit as our content. Our meetings are in mutuality; that is, we encourage the speaking of every believer and reject the clergy-laity system, whereby only one man speaks and all others listen passively. Our meetings are inclusive; that is, we accept and welcome all who believe in Christ as the God-man who lived, died, and rose from the dead because of our sins and for our justification before God (Rom. 4:25). And our meetings are based more on function than on form; that is, we conduct our meetings not according to ritual and tradition but for the sake of furthering the edification of the saints and the building up of the Body of Christ.

Home Meetings

Our simplest meetings are the home meetings. These meetings are for nourishing the new ones and are held in the homes of the saints or of our newly saved believing friends. We meet in homes at least weekly so that we may lead our

relatives, neighbors, friends, and colleagues to accept the Lord's salvation. Once they are saved, we continue to meet with them in the homes in order to nourish them and help them grow in the Christian life. These meetings are generally small, consisting of one or two shepherding saints and the new believer. During these times, we help the new ones to enjoy the Lord through prayer, singing, fellowship, and Bible reading and study.

Perfecting Meetings

We desire that every believer be brought into his or her function of building up the Body of Christ. For this, there is the need of the perfecting of the saints, as spoken of in Ephesians 4:12. We have found that the best way to perfect the saints is to give them frequent opportunity to function; hence, we have meetings just for this purpose. These perfecting meetings are also held in the homes of the saints and consist of around ten to fifteen brothers and sisters. These meetings are characterized by much mutuality in teaching, questioning, answering, shepherding, interceding, and caring. All the saints can be helped practically, and all the saints can exercise their function to minister to others for the building up of the Body of Christ. During these meetings, we all learn from one another how to function properly in the church. In the intimate fellowship of these meetings, we can be corrected by others in love so that we can be perfected in our function. As is taught in Hebrews 10:24-25, in these meetings we incite one another and exhort one another.

Church Meetings

The church, as the pillar and base of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15), meets together to express the Lord

corporately in its locality. The meetings of the church perform a special function that no other gatherings of the believers can. The most important meeting of the church is the Lord's table meeting, or the bread-breaking meeting (1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:17-34). In this meeting we the believers gather to participate in the fellowship of our Lord's blood and body for our enjoyment (1 Cor. 10:16-17) and to remember the Lord for His enjoyment (1 Cor. 11:24-25). The bread we partake of signifies not only our Lord's physical body, which was once broken for us on the cross, but also His mystical Body, of which we are the many members. In partaking of the Lord's table, we "discern the body," as the apostle Paul exhorts us to do (1 Cor. 11:29); that is, we examine ourselves concerning the Lord's Body, asking whether we are divisive individually or whether our meeting is a meeting in division. Here our standing as the church, expressing the oneness of the Body of Christ, is made manifest. We participate in, partake of, and display openly this oneness through our gathering at the Lord's table.

The apostle Paul also speaks of another kind of church meeting in his first Epistle to the Corinthians: "What then, brothers? Whenever you come together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up" (14:26). This is a meeting in which all the brothers and sisters exercise their function to speak, for the building up of the Body of Christ. This is what Paul calls prophesying. It is not foretelling but "forth-telling," speaking *for* God and speaking *forth* Christ from the Word of God for the edification of the believers and for the building up of the church (1 Cor. 14:3-4). This "all-saints-prophesying" meeting provides the brothers and

sisters with the teaching, revelation, consolation, and exhortation that they need as the one church in their locality, and these things are ministered not by a few gifted ones but by all the members mutually (1 Cor. 14:1, 31).

We also gather as the church to pray corporately. In the New Testament there are numerous instances of the saints gathering to pray (Acts 2:42; 4:23-31; 12:5). The church gathers at least once a week to pray for the move of God's economy on the earth, for the binding of the activities of God's enemy, and for the needs of the local church. In this meeting, all the saints function one by one, praying short, released prayers to discharge our burden for the Lord's move through the church.

Sometimes in larger churches, the church meetings are held in district groups of around fifty saints so that there may be more opportunity for the saints to function. The Lord's table meeting, the prophesying meeting, and the prayer meeting are sometimes held in districts.

Ministry Meetings

According to the pattern of the New Testament, we also have meetings for the release of the New Testament ministry. During these meetings gifted members preach the gospel, teach the truth, edify and train the saints, release a particular truth from the Scriptures, or lead a study of a particular portion of the Bible. The meetings held for Peter's preaching (Acts 2:14; 3:12; 10:34) and Paul's teaching (Acts 19:9-10; 20:7; 28:30-31) are examples of this kind of ministry meeting. The major burden of these ministry meetings is borne by those who have the gift to function in this way, but frequently there is additional sharing by the saints who attend these meetings; thus,

even in the ministry meetings there can be the mutual speaking. A degree of perfecting occurs in these ministry meetings that cannot be attained in any other meetings of the saints.

The Christian life is a corporate life, and a great part of our corporateness is expressed in our meetings. As the Scriptures exhort, we do not abandon our assembling together, as the custom with some is, and so much the more as we see the day of our Lord's return drawing near (Heb. 10:24-25).

Our Meetings

*In the Homes
for Nourishing
& Perfecting;
for the Church
& for Ministry*

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