

Worship

God

In

Spirit & Truth

Assembling Unto Edification

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The Bible does not provide specific instructions for the frequency of or the location for assembling together. Jesus in talking with the Samaritan woman (John 4) was explicit in that future worship was not about location.

“The meetings of the early church were marked by every member functioning, spontaneity, freedom, vibrancy, and open participation (see for example 1 Corinthians 14:1-33 and Hebrews 10:25). The first-century church was a fluid gathering, not a static ritual. And it was often unpredictable, unlike the [our] contemporary [institutional] church service.”¹ They met in temple courts public places, and in Christians’ homes. With the onset of persecution by the Jews and the Romans the temple courts and Solomon’s colonnade ceased to be available. This left homes and other available sites.

The Hebrew writer admonishes Christians “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works not forsaking the assembling [intentionally choosing to cease assembling with other Christians] of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24 - 25). The emphasis clearly was to assemble together, to be knowledgeable of one another’s difficulties and concerns, and to encourage fellow Christians to live faithfully and do work pleasing to God and beneficial to others.

What causes forsaking assembly and fellowship? There are innumerable possibilities. Fear of persecution may have been the greatest contributor for the early Church. Self-centered unloving members, dominating and controlling personalities, being ignored, not fitting in economically or socially and many other reasons can discourage fellowship. This should not be so among Christians.

Scriptures referring to Christians coming together:

- Many were gathered together praying (Acts 12:12)
- The disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7)
- Gathered the church together they reported (Acts 14:27)
- Gathered the multitude together - delivered a letter (Acts 15:30)
- When you come together to eat (1 Corinthians 34)
- In the presence of all rebuke sinning elders (1 Timothy 5:20)
- When you gather together ... deliver one to Satan (1 Cor. 5:4-5)
- Read Scriptures and teach give your understanding and listen to others understanding (Colossians 4:16 and Acts 11:26)
- Sing to one another (Ephesians 5:12)
- If the whole church comes together in one place (1 Cor. 14:23)

“³ But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.

¹ Pagan Christianity?, Frank Barna and George Viola pg. 50

4 He who speaks in a tongue (Greek *gloóssee*¹) edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the

church. 5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues (*gloóssais*) but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, (unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. 1Corinthians 14:3-5)

“9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue (*gloóssees*) how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. (1Corinthians 14:9-11)

“18 I thank my God I speak with tongues (*gloóssais*) more than you all; yet in the church [assembly] I would rather speak five words with my understanding, **that I may teach others** also, than ten thousand words in a tongue (*gloóssee*). Therefore, if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues (*gloóssais*), and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you. How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. **Let all things be done for edification.** If anyone speaks in a tongue (*gloóssees*), let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church [assembly –], and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. Let your women, *or wives*, keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church, assembly. ... Let all things be done decently [respectfully] and in order [one following another, not all speaking at the same time]” (1Corinthians 14:18-40 NIV).

The assemblies of the Corinthians were marked by disrespect, chaos and confusion. To correct this problem Paul wrote stating:

1. Prophets were to speak in succession, not at the same time.

¹ a tongue, i.e. the language used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations: (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon)

2. Speakers were to be silent if their language could not be understood and no one was available to interpret.
3. Speakers were to take turns while addressing the assembly as God is not a God of confusion.
4. Wives of prophets were to show respect to their husbands by not questioning them in public but to seek clarification in the privacy of their homes.
5. "Let ALL things be done decently and in order" does NOT mean there must be an established order or ritual without any extemporaneous activity whether song, prayer or speech.

Lessons to be learned

1. Teaching is more important than being heard
2. Orderliness and understanding are critical
3. Participation by all Christians encourages all
4. Edification is necessary for faithfulness
5. Respect for others enhances unity
6. Respect for law and customs cannot be ignored

Questions

1. Church gatherings are not to be structured as a ritual but personal participation encouraged.
 True
 False
2. Christians are to exhort one another unto good works and faithfulness when assembled together.
 True
 False
3. There was chaos and confusion in the Corinthian church as many put them self-first. True
 False
4. Teaching, edifying, respect of others and individual participation is of primary importance when assembled.
 True
 False
5. The primary purpose for assembling as the body of Christ is to encourage and edify.
 True
 False

Answers to Questions

1. True 2.

True 3.

True 4.

True

5. True