

# Meetings of the local assembly Part 2

Bible Basics Conference  
9 November 2024



# What are assembly meetings?

- Meetings when the Lord's people 'come together *in assembly*'\* (1 Cor. 11:18) — the main subject of 1 Cor. 11:17–14:40.
- He gathers them to His name (Matt. 18:20a) — denoting His physical absence — and in doing so presences Himself among them spiritually (v. 20b) wherever they are in this world.
- This is what distinguishes meetings '*in assembly*': **He is in the centre** — the gatherer, focus and leader of His people.

\* Assembly (*ekklesia*) means gathered out ones.

# What are assembly meetings? (continued)

- The Holy Spirit enables us to respond to our Lord's leading and enjoy the blessings His presence brings so it's important we don't grieve or quench Him (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).
- There should be loving **mutuality** — we are '*one body*' — and holy **liberty** and **spontaneity** (Rom. 12:5–6; 14:15; Eph. 5:17–21).
- If our Lord delights to presence Himself among us, why would we — brothers or sisters — choose to stay away?

# We come together for specific purposes

- Firstly, to **break bread** in worshipful remembrance of our Lord,
  - but also for **edification** — spiritual building up as God’s Word is presented to us (1 Cor. 14:1–40),
  - **prayer** — seeking His interests and help (Matt. 18:19),
  - and to decide matters of **fellowship and discipline** (1 Cor. 5:4).
- The Lord may lead us in worship, edification and prayer at all these meetings, but we should set aside specific times for these activities as they’re integral to normal assembly life (Acts 2:42).

# Edification

- Reading God's Word individually and as couples and families is important but our Lord also desires to build up the gatherings of His people by presenting His Word to them for '*edification, and encouragement, and consolation*' (1 Cor. 14:3) as we find in scriptures like Acts 9:31 and 1 Cor. 14:5&12.
- Edification applies God's Word to us as it's needed (Eph. 4:29); teaching applies it systematically (2 Tim. 1:13) — compare Acts 11:23 and 26.

# Edification (continued)

- The *gift* needed for edification is prophecy (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:4, 22) and the *motive* for exercising it must be love (13:2).
- Prophecy in this context means *forthtelling* God's mind for the moment e.g. Eph. 3:5; 1 Cor. 14:31, rather than *foretelling* the future e.g. Acts 21:10–11 — see also Judas and Silas in Acts 15:32 and compare 'consider ...' in Haggai 1:5, 7; 2:15&18 with 'in that day' 19 times in Zechariah.

# Edification (continued)

- Originally prophecy was speaking God's mind in relation to *truth not yet revealed in Scripture* e.g. Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 14:30 as the New Testament was not written yet.
- Today it's speaking His mind in relation to '*the present truth*' (2 Pet. 1:12) — *the Word of God as completed* in the New Testament (Col. 1:25) e.g. Rom. 15:4; 2 Pet. 3:14–18; 1 Tim. 4:6–16; 1 Cor. 14:29b.

# Edification (continued)

- To give edification, brothers need to:
  - be in God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15; Ps. 19:7–8&14; Haggai 1:13),
  - spend time in His presence (Isa. 50:4; Mk 1:35–39),
  - act in faith (Rom. 12:6; 2 Tim. 4:2) and speak as His mouthpieces (1 Pet. 4:11).
- To benefit, we the hearers need to be attentive and subject to what they say (Heb. 13:22; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 14:29b).



# Edification (continued)

- The meeting for edification should consist of two or three brothers speaking (1 Cor. 14:29a, compare v. 26).
- We must wait on the Lord (1 Cor. 14:32) for His word even though this can be very testing — perhaps this meeting, more than any other, reveals a gathering's spiritual health.

# Prayer

- Prayer is a key feature of Biblical Christianity and expresses *intimacy with and dependence on God* — we need His help!
- Private prayer is vital but regular collective prayer is especially important and appreciated by Him, hence His promises in Matthew 18:19–20.
- Collective prayer characterised the gatherings of His people in Acts e.g. 2:42; 4:24; 12:5, 12, and brothers are responsible to maintain it in every place today (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Tim. 2:8).

# Prayer (continued)

- Christian prayer is to the Lord Jesus Himself (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 1:2) and, distinctively, to the Father in His name (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:26–28).
- We pray in the Spirit (Jude v. 20) who graciously helps us in our weakness (Rom. 8:26).
- Our prayers should be real (Eph. 6:18), not routine (Matt. 6:7).

# Fellowship and discipline

- The meeting to decide a question of fellowship or discipline is an assembly meeting because we need the Lord in our midst if we are to act according to His will and with His authority (Matt. 18:18–20; 1 Cor. 5:4&13; see also Acts 15:1–33).
- This meeting is ‘as and when needed’ so we don’t find it in 1 Cor. 11:17–14:40 (the part of the letter that deals with regular assembly meetings).

# What about brothers' meetings?

There are cases where brothers act or meet to take care of a matter e.g. Acts 6:1–6; 13:1–3 (but see 14:26–27); 20:17–35; 21:18–25; Gal. 2:2 (compare with Acts 15), but only a gathering with the Lord in its midst can decide a question of fellowship or discipline.

# We benefit from assembly meetings when we:

- prepare our hearts before going (1 Cor. 11:31; 13:4–7; 14:1),
- believe the Lord is present as He has promised (Matt. 18:20),
- rely on Him to lead us by His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7–11),\*
- seek His glory and the blessing of His people (Col. 3:16–17),
- take part with the understanding (1 Cor. 14:15),
- pray for those who (should) contribute audibly (2 Thess. 3:1),
- listen, discern and add our Amens (1 Cor. 14:16, 19b).

\* The sign gifts mentioned in these verses have generally ceased (1 Cor. 13:8).

# But what if we're few in number and lack ability?

- The Lord *will* guide and supply us what we need e.g. Rev 1:10.
- We should encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 15:32), and ...
- ... take opportunities the Lord gives us to visit other gatherings and go to fellowship meetings etc.



# Other kinds of meeting

- We read in the New Testament of meetings to resolve practical matters (Acts 6:1–4), preach the gospel (Acts 10; 20:20), go through spiritual exercises (13:1–3), hear missionary reports (14:27), confer (15:4–22), read letters (15:30–31; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27), teach the Word (Acts 18:5–8; 19:8–10) ...
- These weren't always meetings '*in assembly*' e.g. they involved unbelievers, specific brothers led them, and we don't have directions for holding them, but the Lord used them.



# Other kinds of meeting (continued)

- Today we hold Bible readings, camps, conferences, gospel meetings, mother and toddler groups, Sunday schools, young people's meetings ... Bible Basics ... and the Lord uses them.
- But they should not *displace* meeting Him 'in assembly' e.g. we should feed the 'lamb' as we feed the 'sheep' (Mark 10:13–16; John 21:15, 17; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2) — not only on their own — nor should they *detract* from scriptural principles e.g. 1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:12; see Acts 18:26; 21:9–10; 1 Cor. 11:4, 5; 2 Tim. 1:5; Titus 2:4; compare Acts 16:13–14 with v. 40).

# Assembly meeting take-aways

- Go with a desire to meet the Lord (John 14:18).
- Arrive on time but let Him show us by the Spirit when it's time to close the meeting (Luke 22:14; Acts 20:7a; 1 Cor. 14:40).
- Wait on Him and one another in an attitude of mutual love, exercise and dependence (1 Cor. 11:17–14:40; Col. 3:12–17).
- Brothers, don't lose the brethren in long prayers (Mark 12:40) — in Scripture they're concise and specific e.g. John 17.
- Go to give (1 Pet. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:1); expect a blessing (Mal. 3:10).