

# High Peaks Bible Fellowship

## What Must Happen When the Church Gathers

### Introduction

- The Holy Spirit has been given a special baptizing ministry since the Day of Pentecost when the church began. This baptizing ministry joins new believers into the Body of Christ, which is the church, which happens the moment a person puts their trust in Christ for salvation.
- In their three primary relationships, believers have several responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ. Once a person becomes a member of the Body of Christ (the Church), then there are new duties and desires for service that begin to grow in the heart.
- Now we will look at the function of the local church, the local gathering of believers, for helping each believer to fulfill the new responsibilities that were given as members of the Body of Christ.

### The Holy Spirit ministers to believers through other believers

- Whatever happens at the local gathering of members of the Body of Christ, it must help each individual believer to fulfill his or her personal responsibilities to God and others. The local gathering of members of the Body of Christ provides an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister to each member through the other members.
- The local gathering of the church provides an environment where believers can minister to each other and build each other up in their faith. Believers can become better equipped with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that will enable them to better fulfill their personal responsibilities to God and others in every area of their lives.
- By providing an orderly and structured setting, the local gathering of members of the Body of Christ can facilitate the proper use of the various spiritual gifts for accomplishing the goal of helping believers to grow to spiritual maturity.



### What is Edification?

- The Corinthian believers were using their spiritual gifts for selfish purposes, rather than for the good of others within the body. In First Corinthians chapter fourteen the apostle Paul directly addressed the issue of how the spiritual gifts were to be used in the church, and he gave the ultimate answer to the question "What must happen when the local church gathers?" Verses twelve and twenty-six show the ultimate purpose for the use of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ:

- "So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church." (1 Cor 14:12)
- "What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:26)
- All of the things we do when we gather together in the local meeting of the Body of Christ must be done for the edification of the body. The Greek term is a compound word with the first part meaning "house" and the second part meaning "to build." The word picture is one of building up the members of the body of Christ in a way that is similar to building a house, bringing it to completion by starting with the right foundation and building it with the right materials and methods.
- Whatever is done when the church meets, it must be done for the building up and instruction of believers for growth toward spiritual maturity.

## How is Edification to happen?

### The Edifying Function of the Local Church

- The local church becomes a *process* through which believers benefit from the equipping gifts of other believers.
- This process is also repetitive, with believers continually becoming better equipped for their responsibilities as they pass through this process over and over again.



### Continually devoted to the Word of God (Acts 2:42)

- In gatherings of the local church, the Word of God is the most important component because that is the primary tool for building up the body of Christ.
- The newborn church continually devoted itself to "*The Teaching*" (literal translation). Their primary focus was to continue steadfastly as learners of the truths of the Word of God. Notice that they did not devote themselves first to their leaders, or to their good works of service, or to the observance of religious ceremonies. The example of the early church was that they devoted themselves to teaching the truths of the Word of God.

### True church growth is growth in the Word of God (Acts 6:4, 7; 12:24; 19:20)

- In Acts chapter six the church had grown so much that the primary church leaders could no longer administer every aspect of its work. They brought in helpers to take care of things like the distribution of food to elderly widows. This freed the leadership to "devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). The result of this decision was recorded in Acts 6:7 --

"The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." This passage does not merely say that believers kept on multiplying, but the focus of this passage is on the fact that the Word of God kept on increasing.

- True church growth cannot be separated from growth in the Word of God. The teaching of the Word of God must expand in order for church growth to happen. Growth in the teaching of the Scriptures is what causes the number of disciples to increase. The church should devote itself to the ministry of the Word and leave the numbers to God.
- After the miraculous death of the wicked King Herod, Acts 12:24 says, "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied." Here it doesn't even say that the number of people increased. It is the increase in the teaching of the Word of God that is the *speedometer* for measuring the positive forward movement of the church.
- In Acts 19:20, after Paul's encounter with the sorcerer, we read, "So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." Again, this passage does not say that great numbers of people became believers. The focus is on growth in the Word of the Lord rather than on growth in the typical metrics used by the *church growth* movement today.



### [The Example of the Apostle Paul \(Acts 20:7,27,31-32\)](#)

- Recorded here is the apostle Paul's example of his typical practice when he met with the local gatherings of believers: "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." (Acts 20:7)
- Later when Paul met with the leaders of the churches in Ephesus he declared, "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God....Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:27, 31-32)
- Paul commended them to God and to the Word of God, not to their leaders or to their works of service or to their ceremonial rituals. Paul simply proclaimed the truths of God's Word to anyone who would listen.

### [The Instructions Given by the Apostle Paul \(1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:1-2; Titus 1:9\)](#)

- "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." (1 Tim 4:13) Paul instructed church leaders to read Scripture aloud and to teach the truths of the Word of God.
- "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim 2:2) The teaching of the truths of God's Word must be the central focus of church leaders, and they must pass on *The Teaching* to faithful men who can teach others also.
- "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction." (2 Tim 4:1-2) Notice that Paul did not tell him to conduct marketing campaigns or inspirational seminars, nor did he tell him

to conduct detailed *fruit inspections* of the members of the local assembly and to chastise them for their unfaithfulness — what we might call "beating the sheep into submission."

- "Hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict." (Titus 1:9) Paul instructed Titus to appoint church leaders who would cling to the truths of God's Word so that they could teach other believers.

## Why so much emphasis on the Teaching of the Word?

Learning from the Word of God is the only way believers can grow in the following areas:

- Faith (Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:14-15)  
Hearing and understanding the Word is what brings a person to salvation and faith in Christ.
- Knowledge of God (Colossians 1:9-10)  
The Bible emphasizes knowing God over experiencing God. A proper knowledge of God in a right relationship with God leads to positive experiences with God, and not the other way around. An emphasis on the subjective, self-centered experience of God often leads away from a true knowledge of God and obedience to His Word.
- Obedience (John 14:15, 21, 24)  
Obedience to God cannot happen without first having a knowledge of God's will through His Word.
- Transformation (John 17:17; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 4:12)  
It is the Word of God that changes people as the Holy Spirit applies it to the human heart.
- Equipping for Ministry (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ... so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

## The Church Facilitates the Edification of the Body of Christ

- Whatever the local gathering of members of the Body of Christ does, it must help each individual believer to fulfill his or her personal responsibilities to God and others. "Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:26)
- The local gathering of the church provides an environment where believers can minister to each other and build each other up in their faith.
- In gatherings of the local church, the Word of God is the most important component because that is the primary tool for building up the body of Christ. True *church growth* cannot be separated from growth in the Word of God.



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