

Functioning Together

Traditions

One of the things that irritate me is when I hear someone say “we *had* church” or “let's *do* church” or even “*go to* church”. These types of phrases are a sure sign that the one speaking doesn't have a clue about what is “church”. This is simply tradition that has been passed down to us by our institutional “churches”. Traditions hinder the work of God just as Jesus said.

Mark 7:8-9 NASB

- (8) "Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men."
- (9) He was also saying to them, "You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition."

Matthew 15:3 NASB

- (3) And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Our “church” traditions have prevented us from seeing the requirements of God and His purposes for “church”. Many institutional churches have truly become experts at setting aside the commandments of God in order to keep their traditions. These are some examples of commandments of the Lord that have been set aside by many (maybe even most) denominational church organizations.

1. Be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
2. Do not forbid to speak in tongues (I Cor. 14:39).
3. Be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21).
4. Earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophesy (I Cor. 14:1).
5. Do not store up on earth treasure for yourself (Matt. 6:19).
6. Do not worry about tomorrow (Matt. 6:34).
7. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you given by prophesy (I Tim. 4:14)

This is just a sampling of examples. Someone has estimated that there are over a 1000 commands in the New Testament. Do not let any tradition of the institutional church stop or even hinder what God wants to do with you or through you among His people. If we will only follow the Spirit of God, the Lord will build us together as His Body in the earth.

The Body of Christ

The Church, the *ekklesia*, the Body of Christ is a spiritual reality. As such, we can only know, understand and participate as we walk in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:27 NASB

(27) Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Paul did not say that we are “*like*” a body, we *are* the body. This is reality. It is a fact that transcends both the natural and spiritual dimensions. To fulfill our destiny in God, we must learn to function together as the Body of Christ. What exactly does that mean?

1. **Complete *submission and obedience to the Head, who is Christ***¹. Without the head the body is dead. The head gives *identity* and directs the *function* of the corporate body.
2. **Come under the *headship of the Lord Jesus***. Headship provides *covering* and *authority*. Scripturally, there is a directed *order* for this. God is the head of Christ; Christ is the head of the man (meaning every man); man is the head of the woman (meaning the man's wife).² This is not a man-made order, neither is it a tradition, but, it is a reality, which we cannot change.³
3. **Be *baptized into the Body***. This is not water baptism, but rather a work of the Spirit that *immerses* us into His people⁴, which brings *unity* and *cohesiveness*. This is a necessary procedure for us to function as a many membered Body.
4. **Be *placed in Body relationships***. Placement is our *fit* with others. It provides *strength* and *growth* to the Body.⁵ We can only find complete fulfillment in our *function* when we are placed correctly. How and where we are placed is at the sole discretion of the Lord Jesus in His role as Head of His Body.

1 Ephesians 5:23

2 I Corinthians 11:3

3 There is a deceptive teaching flowing through some groups of God's people that teaches that men need to be “covered”. By this, it is meant that a man needs to be “submitted” to some leader who will provide “covering and accountability”. This is a mixture of things from I Corinthians 11 and teachings from the Shepherding Movement. The deception is in the fact that a man needs to be “covered”. If the man is walking in the Spirit he is covered by Christ in the same manner that the man covers his wife. We have no need for anyone else between us and the Lord. As a matter of fact, it would be an affront to the Lord if we thought that we needed a man to cover us. Is He not adequate?

4 I Corinthians 12:13 [For further explanation of this see the section on “Doctrine of Baptisms” in the *Blueprint Series: Foundation Principles* available on the website.]

5 Ephesians 4:16

5. **Begin to *function* as a Body member.** Function provides *service* to other Body members. As we are joined (placed) with others we begin to provide a flow of the life that the Lord has put in us so that other Body members may be nourished.⁶

While I have separated these aspects of being a Body member, in practice these occur simultaneously on multiple fronts in our lives. It is not enough to *know* these things; we have to put them into practice; we have to *experience* the Lord in one another.

Body Ministry

In the institutional churches body ministry means all sorts of different things. However, scripturally, body ministry has a very specific definition.

Ephesians 4:15-16 NASB

- (15) but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,
- (16) from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

A body joint is where two members who are placed together in the Body by the Spirit touch life with each other. Each individual part, if it is working properly, actually supplies something to the joint and to the Body. The process of providing that “something” is *body ministry*. It is real life from the Lord that flows through us to one another, just as Jesus said.⁷ When we come together, this should be abundant.

1 Corinthians 14:26 NASB

- (26) 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.

The Lord provides for us by ministering to us through others. There are things that we receive from the Lord directly; but, there are other things that can only be received through our fellow body members. There are even times when the Lord requires us to involve others in things that the Lord has done for us directly in the past.⁸ We have to *learn* that we need each other. The Holy Spirit teaches us of our need when He provides circumstances that we can't deal with or overcome by ourselves; but requires us to involve other body members.

6 Colosians 2:19

7 John 7:38

8 James 5:16

One of the primary purposes of gathering together as the Body, the *ekklesia*, the Church, is to provide opportunity for the Holy Spirit to minister through us to one another. That means that each member brings something from the Spirit to the gathering. It may be a song or hymn. It may be a revelation or a teaching. It may be a prophetic word from tongues and interpretation. It may be a multitude of things that the Holy Spirit has orchestrated as needed for that particular gathering. All of this is done so that the Body and all of the members may be edified, that is, built up.

Our traditions have created gatherings of believers in denominational churches (even house⁹ churches) where it is impossible to follow I Corinthians 14:26 without being rebellious to leadership or completely out of order (their order). Why? Because, institutionally we *have* church instead of organically *being* church. We follow a pre-defined agenda, an order of service created by our training and traditions and, as a result, we neglect to follow the Head and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

A true gathering of the Body requires every member involvement. There are no useless members or spectator members with nothing to offer. The Holy Spirit has given to every man gifts according to His will and purpose.

1 Corinthians 12:7 NASB

(7) But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

The primary purpose of the gifts or manifestations of the Holy Spirit is for the common good, that is, body ministry to one another. Room must be made in every gathering for the Holy Spirit to minister to us through the gifts of the Spirit.

At the beginning of the Seventies, when the Charismatic movement was just beginning to take off, most gatherings of newly Spirit filled people were in homes. My wife and I were a part of one of these that met on Tuesday nights. During the week between gatherings, each one of us sought the Lord for our contribution to the next gathering. We took I Corinthians 14:26 seriously as the pattern for a gathering. We called this verse the “*hatha*” verse because we used the King James Bible and it used “*hatha*” for “*has*”. When we got together, each one of us was ready with our “*hatha*” that the Lord had given or done for us during the previous week.

Because of this, the Lord ministered very powerfully to us through one another. It was very common for the Lord to bring new insight into His Word through revelation or teaching. It was also very common for deliverance and healings to occur. We entered into worship that carried us into the throne room of God where we fell on our faces before Him. We matured together as each joint provided what the Lord had given for the common good, for the increase of the Body in the edifying of itself in love.

⁹ Having gatherings in a house rather than a church building doesn't change anything except location unless there is also a paradigm shift in the structure and function of the gatherings.

The Lord even sent some of us out in, what we would call today, an apostolic ministry. We established five other independent home groups in the surrounding towns. These groups all functioned under the direction of the Holy Spirit with every member involvement just like our original group did. The blessing of the Lord was strong.

Then, the Shepherding Movement swept through our area and disrupted the gatherings with their teaching. Eventually, the home groups dissolved, leaving only those who pursued the Shepherding teachings. Others went back to their denominational churches while some attempted to start a “new church”. The end result was that the Charismatic people of God were scattered and remain scattered to this day.

Through the Charismatic move of the Holy Spirit, the Lord desired to establish His people and restore many aspects of the Word that had been lying fallow for generations. What we didn't understand at the time was that the Lord has a pattern or methodology for doing this. [*For further information on this see the teaching “Pattern for Church Development” available on the website.*] In our corporate development we had reached the place where the Lord begins to establish government and the Spirit was stirring our hearts concerning this issue when the Shepherding teachings first came our way. Their teachings were a fleshly counterfeit to God's true government and, because of our own ignorance of the Kingdom of God, we were taken captive. Whenever we replace a spiritual step in our development with a natural or fleshly process, the anointing of the Spirit begins to withdraw resulting in more and more actions being done in the flesh rather than the Spirit. That is one of the reasons that the residue of the Charismatic Movement is so flaky with emotional and flesh driven gatherings and ministries with too much emphasis on extreme, deceptive teaching and leadership.

This time, with the current move of the Spirit, we must remember that the Lord desires that we serve one another. This is done through the Body ministry in our believer gatherings. The Spirit brings us together for a single purpose that is manifested in two aspects of His moving: (1) we are to minister to the Lord and (2) we are to minister to each other. The Holy Spirit, Himself, provides all of the resources to accomplish this. We only need to be obedient.