

The Local Assembly

Ministry Meetings by Mr. Norman Crawford
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12 Unique Things about a Local Assembly

- 1. Entity, uniqueness, and autonomy of the local church in distinction from the body.**
 - Reception: A Within and a Without
 - Acts 2:41, 42; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; 3:9-17; 5:12, 13; 2 Cor. 6:16
- 2. Uniqueness of the name of the Lord Jesus; exclusion of every other name.**
 - Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2, 10; 1 Cor. 5:4; Phil. 2:9-11
- 3. Priority of the breaking of bread, and of spiritual worship.**
 - Luke 22:14-20; John 4:19-26; 1 Cor. 11:23-34
- 4. Proclamation of the Gospel—dependence on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in salvation and service.**
 - 1 Cor. 2:2-5; 2:13-16; 2 Cor. 4:3-6. 1 Thess. 1:8-10
 - The cross as seen by the World, the Witnesses, the Worshipper, and the Waiting believer.
- 5. Practice of NT priesthood.**
 - Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 14:26-39; 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:5, 6
- 6. Recognition of spiritual gifts and liberty for their function.**
 - One-man ministry and all-men ministry denied.
 - Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11, 28-31; Eph. 4:8-16
- 7. Local government by the Word of God under a plurality of elders, raised up by the Holy Spirit.**
 - Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4
- 8. The authority of the Word of God alone without the authority of creedal statements, organizational rules, or councils.**
 - Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17
- 9. A spiritual, not organizational link between assemblies.**
 - Acts 11:22-26; 14:23-28
- 10. The silence of women.**
 - 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:8-15
- 11. No financial support from unbelievers.**
 - 3 John 5-8; Prov. 15:8; 21:27
- 12. Internal discipline and excommunication when Scripture demands it.**
 - 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 1 Tim. 1:18-20

Many of the practices outlined above are unique to assemblies. Some companies conform in part to some of these truths, but when all of these truths are practiced, we are able to identify a NT

assembly. An assembly is not identified because it is listed in an address book or recognized by some church organization. The identifying marks are spiritual. We have discovered assemblies that we never knew existed. We know them by the truths they believe and practice.

I. The Entity, Uniqueness, and Autonomy of the Local Church in Distinction from the Body

- A Within and a Without. Reception. Acts 15:14; Eph. 1:22-23; Acts 2:41, 42; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; 3:9-17.
- A. The Divine Plan for the present age**—Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 15:14. Not to make a better world, but “to take out of it.” The Spiritual Body.
- B. The Distinctions between the spiritual body and a local assembly.**
 1. Many believers who are in the body are not in an assembly.
 2. The body is entered at conversion (1 Cor. 12:13).
 3. An assembly is entered by reception (Acts 9:26-28; Acts 2:42).
- C. The Distinct Pattern of a local assembly**—Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy. The Seven Features of the Pattern in Acts 2:42. Why is this so important? In 1 Corinthians the disorder is corrected by the application of the pattern.
- D. Ten Descriptive names of an assembly in the NT**—1 Cor. 3:9-17.
 1. Church of God, 1 Cor. 1:2 Its Purpose
 2. Tillage of God, 1 Cor. 3:9 Its Planting
 3. Building of God, 1 Cor 3:9 Its Pattern
 4. Temple of God, 1 Cor 3:16 Its Praise
 5. Body of Christ, 1 Cor 12:27 Its Provision
 6. Chaste virgin, 2 Cor 11:2 Its Purity
 7. Little flock, Acts 20:28 Its Pathway
 8. House of God, 1 Tim 3:15 Its Peculiarity
 9. Pillar of truth, 1 Tim 3:15 Its Proclamation
 10. Golden lampstand, Rev 1:20 Its Profession
- E. “The church of God” is used 13 times**—in every case it refers to a local assembly. When a number of them are being described, they may be called:
 1. Churches of God—their purpose
 2. Churches of Christ—their Lord
 3. Churches of saints—their composition
 4. Churches of Gentiles—their background
 5. Churches of Galatia—their location
 - Problem: What about 1 Cor. 15:9? Only the Jerusalem church existed.

II. The Assembly in Corinth

1. Its Character
2. Its Commandment
3. Its Conduct
4. Its Care
5. Its Continuance

How can an assembly be preserved? Our failure could cause it to cease.

1. The Correction of Division (1 Cor. 1:10).
2. The Character of Holiness (1 Cor. 3:16-17)
3. Commitment to the Pattern (1 Cor. 14:37)
4. Christian Simplicity (1 Cor. 2:2-5)
5. Carefulness in Reception (1 Cor. 16:10).
6. Carrying Out of Discipline (1 Cor. 5:11-13).
7. Coming Out of Mixtures (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

“The Things of the Lord” (7:32) in 1 Corinthians:

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| 1. Name of the Lord (1:1-7; 5:5) | Appreciation |
| 2. Coming of the Lord (1:7) | Expectation |
| 3. Table of the Lord (10:21) | Separation |
| 4. Supper of the Lord (11:20) | Commemoration |
| 5. Death of the Lord (11:26) | Proclamation |
| 6. Commandment of Lord (14:37) | Inspiration |
| 7. Work of the Lord (15:58) | Exhortation |

III. Reception to a Local Assembly

A. Why is reception necessary?

1. Because being in the body is distinct from being in an assembly.
2. An assembly is an expression of the body, not a miniature.
3. We enter the body by an act of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).
4. We enter an assembly by an act of men (Acts 9:26-28).
5. An assembly is a number of believers in a locality who have been gathered by the Spirit and meet together regularly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. Such a company has a “within” and a “without” (1 Cor. 5:13).

B. What does reception mean?

1. Reception to the fellowship of an assembly (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor. 14:22, 32).
2. Reception to privileges and responsibilities.
 - Not merely to a breaking of bread meeting.
3. For fellowship there must be a mutual reception.
 - The assembly receives the believer.
 - The believer receives the assembly/beliefs/practices.
4. “Occasional fellowship” is unknown in the NT.

C. Who receives a believer?

1. The responsibility falls on elders (Acts 20:28-32).
2. Reception, however, is an act of an assembly (Rom. 16:1, 2).

D. Initial Reception of a New Convert—Acts 2:41, 42

E. Reception of a Visiting Saint—2 Cor. 3:1-3

1. What is the purpose of a letter of commendation?
 - The necessity of letters (Rom. 16:1, 2).
2. Is it possible to receive without a letter?
 - Barnabas gave testimony for Saul (Acts 9:27).
 - The necessity to use caution (1 Cor. 3:9-11).

3. Romans 14:1; 15:7 refer to assembly unity, not reception.

F. Reception of a Relocating Saint—Acts 18:27

1. Is there a distinction between a visitor & a new resident?
 - A visitor is to be helped by the assembly (Rom.16:2).
 - A new resident should be a help to the assembly (Acts 18:27).

G. Reception of a Restored Saint—2 Cor. 2:2-11

1. Discipline is an act of an assembly (2 Cor. 2:6).
2. The disciplined man in 1 Cor. 5:5 was a true believer.
3. Discipline is always with restoration in view (1 Tim. 1:20).
4. Discipline is carried out with mourning (1 Cor. 5:2).
5. Recovery is in love confirmed, forgiveness, and joy (2 Cor. 2:8).
6. Illustration in the leprous house (Lev. 14:34-53).

H. Reception of a Teacher or a Preacher—Acts 18:27

1. Why is extra care needed?
2. Elders are God's stewards to feed, guide and protect the little flock. They are responsible for all that is spoken publicly in an assembly (Titus 1:7; Luke 12:42).
3. The NT is full of evidence for this extra caution (1 Cor.4:14-18; 16:10-12; Phil. 2:19-29).

IV. The Uniqueness of the Name of the Lord Jesus; the Exclusion of Every Other Name—Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 1:1, 2, 10; 1 Cor. 5:4; Phil. 2:9-11.

A. A Distinctive Name—Matt. 18:15-20. Verse 20 contains the first mention of an assembly, and shows:

1. The Authority of His name
2. The Uniqueness of His name
3. The Attraction of His peerless name
4. The Exclusion of every other name

B. Four False Objections to this Use of Matthew 18:20:

1. It does not contain all the truths about an assembly.
2. No assembly existed when the words were spoken.
3. It is a personal offense, not assembly fellowship.
4. This is a case of discipline.

V. Priority of the Breaking of Bread, and of Spiritual Worship

- Luke 22:14-20; John 4:19-26; 1 Cor.11:23-34.

A. The Lord's Supper—what is its true name?

1. The Lord's Table—1 Cor. 10:14-17. When communion is the subject.
2. The Lord's Supper—1 Cor. 11:20. When sanctity (holiness) is the subject.
3. The Breaking of Bread—Acts 2:42. When simplicity is the subject.

B. Lord is only twice used as an adjective: 1 Cor. 11:20 and Rev. 1:10.

1. 1 Cor 10:21 The Table of the Lord
2. 1 Cor 11:20 The Supper of the Lord
3. 1 Cor 11:26. The Death of the Lord

4. 1 Cor 11:27 The Blood of the Lord
 - Twice from heaven He used the name Jesus—the response was *LORD*.
 - Note the following distinctions:
 - i. Victim—the Death of Jesus: the Pathway
Emphasis: lowly, despised, shame, suffering.
 - ii. Value—the Death of Christ: the Plan
 - iii. Victor—the Death of the Lord: the Person
'Tis in Thy cross Lord that we learn what Thou in all Thy fullness art.
 - i. The wonder of His love: He is Jesus our Lord.
 - ii. The work of His cross: He is Christ the Lord.
 - iii. The worth of His Person: He is our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Who should partake of it? Acts 2:41-42, “they continued steadfastly.”

1. The first rejection of an unfit participant is noted in 1 Cor. 11:23.
2. The Supper is never observed apart from an assembly.
3. We never receive to the Supper, but to the fellowship.

D. How important is it?

1. The Lord’s command, not a request: “This do.”
2. The first priority on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1).

E. What is the preparation for it?

1. The investigation for it—1 Cor. 11:28-32, “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat.”

F. What is the meaning of it?

1. A collective act, yet individual. The significant “breaking” of the bread does not occur at the table; rather, the breaking of bread occurs when we each take the bread, break it, and eat it.
2. Two distinct things:
 - i. We remember Him (1 Cor. 11:24). His Person
 - ii. We proclaim His death (1 Cor. 11:26). His Work
3. The proclamation is made:
 - i. To God
 - ii. To our own hearts
 - iii. To angels
 - iv. To fellow believers

VI. The Proclamation of the Gospel

- A. Dependence on the Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit in salvation and service**—1 Cor. 2:2-5; 2:13-16; 2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Thess. 1:8-10.

VII. Themes from 1 Corinthians

A. Three Major Themes in the Epistle:

1. The Cross
2. The Church

3. The Coming

B. Character of the Epistle:

1. Epistle of assembly order and practice (cp. 1 Timothy)
2. Epistle of the gathering together
3. Epistle of the Lordship of Christ
4. Epistle of the Lord the Spirit
5. “In the Lord” ten times
6. “In church” seven times
7. “When ye are gathered together” seven times

C. Seven Pictures of Service in Chapters 2, 3, 4:

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| 1. A Messenger | The Weight of the Message (2:1-9) |
| 2. A Husbandman | The Work of the Sower (3:6-9) |
| 3. A Master Builder | The Wisdom of the Builder (3:10-11) |
| 4. An Attendant | The Waiting for the Word (4:1) |
| 5. A Steward | The Wealth of the Treasure (4:1-5) |
| 6. A Model | The Walk of the Servant (4:9-16) |
| 7. An Apostle | The Wielding of Authority (5:4) |

D. The Cross As Seen By:

1. The World
2. The Witnesses
3. The Worshiper
4. The Waiting Believer

E. The Cross:

1. Object of the World’s Contempt (1:18-24)
2. Theme of Gospel Preaching (2:1-8)
3. Motive for Christian Conduct (8:10-12)
4. Barrier between Believer and the World (10:14-22)
5. Truth Proclaimed at the Supper (11:23-28)
6. Basis of our Hope (15:3)

F. Compare The Words For “Preach” in 1:17, 18, 21, 23; 2:1.

G. The Messenger in 1 Corinthians 2:

- V 1 The Source of his message—“of God”
- V 2 The Subject of his message—“Christ crucified”
- V 3 The Simplicity of his message—“not know anything”
- V 4 The Success of his message—“demonstration of Spirit”

H. The Message in 1 Corinthians 2:

- V 4 The Demonstration of its power
- V 10 The Revelation of its truth
- V 12 The Illumination of minds
- V 13 The Inspiration by the Spirit
- V 15 The Interpretation of Scripture