SERVANTS

IN THE KINGDOM

by Randolph Dunn

In A Functioning Organism

Chapter 1

Christ's Body - A Functioning Organism

The Bible does not appear to provide instructions for the frequency of or location for meeting together. In fact, Jesus stated to the Samaritan woman that the location was not important. (John 4:3) It is the inner being, soul or heart that worships.

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." (Heb 10:25)

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, ***that you may proclaim*** *the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)

Much is recorded about the actions of these 1st century Christians - Christ's "called out people."

a. Devoted themselves to apostles' teachings. Acts 2:42
b. Had everything in common. Acts 2:44
c. Met together daily, ate, shared what they had, gathered at Solomon's Colonnade. Acts 5:12
d. Elite Hebrew Jews ignored the Greek-speaking widows, Jews from different parts of the Roman Empire. Acts 6
e. The church body chose servants to **provide for** the needs of the Greek Christian widows. Acts 6
f. **Buried** Stephen and **mourned** deeply for him. Acts 7
g. Remained faithful while being persecuted. Acts 8
h. Fleeing persecution, abandoned their home and non-Christian family. Acts 8
i. Upon arrival in their new land, they **taught** the Gospel. Acts 8:4
j. So, the disciples **determined**, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. Acts 11:29-30
k. Many were gathered together **praying.** Acts 12:12
l. Gathered the church together for a **report.** Acts 14:27
m. Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the **whole church, to choose** men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. Acts 15:22
n. Gathered the multitude together - **deliver the letter** Acts 15: 31
o. The disciples **came together** to break bread. Acts 20:7
p. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus … **deliver** this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit (soul) may be saved in the day of the Lord. 1 Cor 5:4-5
q. In the presence of all **rebuke** sinning elders. 1 Timothy 5:20

Comment: When the **whole church** came together in one place, their meetings were of a functioning body, freedom, vibrancy, open participation to all, but not necessarily always in unity.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word (say) or deed (do), *do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."* (Col. 3:16-17)

Comment: "You" includes both men and women who may have a psalm, teaching, prophesying, revelation, or interpretation. But not everyone would be performing all these functions. The teaching was done by "you" not any professional preacher or speaker.

Comment: Don't take glory from God unto yourself.

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." (2 Timothy 2:20-21)

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget ***to do good and to share with others****, for with such sacrifices (*offerings*) God is pleased."* (Hebrews 13:15-
16)

Comment: "Fruit of lips" is not limited to singing.

The Church Christ built is an organized organism, not an organization with positions of authority or rank. It is a body of faithful, obedient and believing people with differing functions (gifts) in a way that the Christian body may fulfill its mission of seeking the lost, care for one another and carry out all the services that Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, gave them to do. No one was inferior or superior - all are necessary for the Body to function properly. The Body is one in Christ and united in Him and His purposes rather than in agreement of opinion and interpretation of some teaching.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts (functions) differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them." (Romans 12:3-8)

Comment: "More-highly" - One is not important because they have a special gift, such as speaking in a language unfamiliar to them, a tongue. The function of man's physical heart is no more important than the function of his intestines. So, one Christian's function is no more important than another's.

Comment: "Functions" needs of the church Body vary so functions vary according to the need. Performance of a function should not be based on ability, education or on secular occupation but on needs of the Christian family.

Those in Christ, His Body, are called out of sin unto righteousness, a changed forgiven people and part of the One Body - a living organism, with many parts. It is compared to the human body with its many parts all functioning in harmony, with each part performing its unique function.

Therefore, the Church Christ built is a body of faithful, obedient and involved people organized in a way that the body may grow and fulfill its mission by caring for one another and performing services that Christ, the Head of the Body, gave them to do.

However, in the church in Corinth, there appears to have been chaos – all talking at the same time, not one following another, and little respect for one another.

Consider 1 Corinthians 14.

"Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. (vs. 20-22)

"If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. (vs. 23-25)

What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. (vs. 26- 33)

"As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (vs. 33-35)

"Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should be done decently and in order." (vs. 36-40)

Recap

1. Under these conditions the Corinthian Christians could learn little and few, if any, were edified. Perhaps many felt "my function is more important than yours I can _____."
2. Teaching was more important than being heard.
3. Orderliness and understanding are important.
4. Participation by all Christians is important.
5. Edification is necessary for faithfulness and growth so, do not abandon coming together.
6. Respect of others enhances unity.
7. Respect of law and customs cannot be ignored.
8. A wife's conduct dishonored her husband or someone else by their questions that appeared to be a challenge.
9. Disrespect of others by trying to talk louder than them.

10. Their actions needed to display their love for each other so any observing outsider would glorify God.

End Recap

"*If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power forever and ever."* (1 Peter 4:11b)

"Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to <u>*show hospitality*</u> *to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those* [Christians] *who are* <u>*in prison,*</u> *as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body."* **(**Heb 13:1-3)

Comment: "Show hospitality" is to take care of the needs of others, including travelers but not those who taught a message contrary to Christ's Gospel.

Comment: Those "in prison" – probably Christians persecuted by imprisonment for their belief in Christ.

"*Whatever you do,* ***work heartily****, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ*." (Colossians 3:23-24)

"Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may ***see your good deeds*** *and glorify God on the day of visitation."* (1 Peter 2:12)

"Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without <u>*grumbling.*</u> *As* ***each has received*** <u>***a gift use it to serve***</u> ***one another****, as good stewards of God's varied grace whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies— in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever."* (1 Peter 4:8-11)

Comment: "Grumbling" – "Why do I have to do this?" Or, "I don't want to but, I will do it out of duty." "Gift to serve" – you receive something that is to be used to benefit others.

"If anyone does not ***take care of*** *(*provide for*) his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."* (1 Timothy 5:8)

"A religion that is pure and stainless according to God the Father is this: to ***take care of orphans and widows*** *who are suffering and to keep oneself unstained by the world."* (James 1:27)

"For God is not unjust so as to overlook ***your work*** *and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end."* (Hebrews 6:10-11)

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:910)

Questions

1. The Bible specifies where and when to assemble together.

   ○

   ○ True

   False

2. The gift of teaching is more important than admonishing.
   - True
   - False

3. Hospitality is having people over for fellowship and a meal.
   -
   - True
   - False

4. All Christians receive a gift to serve
   -
   - True
   - False

5. Pure religion is seeing to needs of the destitute unable to care for themselves.
   -
   - True
   - False

Answers to Questions

1. False 2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True