

## General Topics :: Gospel Fellowship Meetings Question

### Gospel Fellowship Meetings Question - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/3/26 12:57

For some time, my wife and I have lead a Friday night bible study. It began in the summer of 2011 when we were captured by the vision of a certain recovery ministry. We flew to Illinois from Alabama for a weekend, were treated unkindly and insulted openly for being part of a Pentecostal denomination, grinned and bore it and thanked them for the privilege, completed the training, returned to our local church and started the ministry in earnest. We started with 10 or so, eventually saw around 25-30 each week, and in time the interest waned. Lots of other programs in town were doing the same thing; our church members did lip service only to what we were doing; and after 15 months we were down to 10 again.

In January, 2013, we shifted what we were doing. The ministry of Francis Chan and David Platt moved my wife and I deeply. Our pastor, too, was intensely following that vision and shared it with us. We still do. But, we started into the Multiply curriculum as our Friday night meeting. Completely ditched the original format, which was more regimented but fruitful for those of us who engaged it seriously. However, in time again, we dwindled to 6. But, we've remained steady and have not stopped although we questioned many times the wisdom of keeping it up.

A word was given to us by one of our older, senior prayer warriors not to give up on the seed that God had planted in our hearts. Two of our little group said they would continue with us and not to stop.

All the while, I've been following this website closely. From the get-go of launching the first of the Friday night meetings, I've urged everyone to make this website a resource for growth, maturity, devotion, etc. I don't know how many and to what extent they've done so; certainly, I'm sure I make use of it!!

But, the desire of my heart, the vision in my spirit, the deep longing within me is to see us shed the need for church as we've known it and to meet in our Friday night times under the basic principles I see advocated here by brother Greg.

I've read some of the Principles book. Frankly, and I mean this as a self-critique and not a slight of the work in the book, I find it very difficult to read through the whole thing. I've asked here for any help on a more condensed laying out of what the vision is for Gospel Fellowship meetings. So far, the Principles book remains --- as far as I know --- the resource for that here.

I trust here. I am not planning to look around online for every Joe Brother's ideas. We don't need ideas. We need the Holy Ghost and the Word of God. (Pardon me while I break Pentecostal on you!!) We need a divine feed of the presence, the glory, the truth and the Word of God moment by moment to accomplish the "bringing of many sons to glory" that the Scripture teaches us about. Seems to me that the vision of SermonIndex and the Gospel Fellowships is yielded to that purpose, so I am here with an open heart and looking for help.

Recently, in our Friday night group, we set aside Multiply. We said, "Let's do this. Let's go to the book of Acts. Let's sit here with our Bibles open, let's pray, let's all ask the Lord to be the head of our meeting, let's invite and ask the Holy Spirit to exercise any and all of the gifts of the Spirit in any one or more or all of us and let's yield and submit to one another as we read, discuss and study. Let's share the floor. Let's not look to any one of us as THE leader, THE teacher. Let's learn from the Lord."

Now, honestly, I wasn't expecting what happened next. We spent about 6 weeks with this principle. And, frankly again, nothing really spectacular happened or anything. In fact, one of the folks who had recently started coming has decided she does not want any part of our church as a whole, and she's got other things going on in her heart, and so she has dropped out and her husband has kept coming but it is obviously under duress. But, we've kept on. We just don't know what else to do and we believe this is being obedient.

Then, our pastor attended one night. We maintained our format. We didn't change anything for him. (He's a good pastor, by the way, and longs for the glory and presence of God.) We 5 or 6 sat there for three hours in our praying, talking, sharing and yielding to one another. The next day, Pastor calls me and says, "I love what's happening in there." And, he wants the whole church to know of it and to purposely direct other groups within the church to that meeting. So, he's making preparation for that.

Meanwhile, all we want to do is obey the Lord and meet under the headship of Christ. That's what we intend to continue to do, and He is bearing witness of His own desires for us to do this. People are coming to us and calling us, from inside and outside of our church, and are bringing to us their need for God, their need for healing spiritually and physically. So, we press on.

What I'm asking for is some help with the meeting format. I'm being asked -- and this is something I'm not comfortable with -- to "cast vision" about what we're doing. Honestly, I can do that with my wife, but this is something that is being "birthed" in us over long periods of time and hours and hours of conversation and prayer. I could easily put together a speech, but I don't want to!! :) I want the Lord to do His own explaining, I guess. (?) I guess I just don't want some pre-determined need for a vision casting to trump the activity of the Holy Spirit. It almost feels to me like Israel doing a census -- and I know that doesn't make a lick of sense, but that's the internal "gnawing" I get when I think of trying to formulate this for someone else's consumption. And, maybe it is just that -- the idea that I've got to explain something for someone else to "consume" and "get it" -- that strikes me as counter-intuitive about how the Lord is moving.

What I'm fishing for more than anything is simply a description of what the meeting looks like. I think that simply describing what we are doing and why is sufficient. I don't have a 'vision', per se, at least not in the way that word has come to be used in church circles in recent years. It is attaching a spiritual term to a fleshly idea, it implies a plan. You can't plan an inferno. We want the fire of God to consume US, not make Him digestible for someone else to consume.

So, as rambling as this is and as vague as I've stated it, I'm asking for some help on describing what Gospel Fellowship meetings ARE. I'm not going to use the phrase "gospel fellowship" as I discuss with others. This is not a program. If it is, then I either need to be moved on to see the need for a program or I need to stop altogether. We've had enough programs. All of us. We need the Lord and His power and His truth to sustain us in the days and years to come. This is the last days....but now I'm preaching to the choir, I suppose.

Your prayerful input appreciated.

**Re: Gospel Fellowship Meetings Question, on: 2014/3/26 13:58**

Brother, if I may weigh in? First of all, you are more than welcome to "break Pentecostal on me"!

I have read some of the Gospel Fellowship book, but like you can't get through the whole thing. I have been involved in organic house church for most of my life in the Lord. We don't send our kids to day care, either.

And that brings me to my first point. The "meeting" does not have to look like any pattern. Notice, when Jesus met with people during His 3 years, that He did it in so many unique ways. My second point is that we should jettison the word meeting because of the mindset behind it. The Church is not a meeting and the meeting is not the Church. We fellowship, have "love feasts", have "family time", but not meetings. That is a word that lends itself more to corporate organizations. Every church (small c) has a personality of its own which is a conglomeration of all the members of that particular church and what the Lord is doing in them and through them at any given time.

We don't regulate our family structure and how we relate to each other in the home, why do we have to regulate our time together as Saints? The Holy Spirit knows how to touch each person to bring "order", which is simply politeness, patience, longsuffering, sensitivity in the Spirit. In short, "preferring one another".

You want to be careful that you don't quench the Spirit and "regulate" the LIFE out of the "meeting". God's sheep are tender and fragile and we have found that mature saints lead by example and others will see in their lives and conduct how to prefer one another and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. That is precisely why it is important for the most mature saints to be careful NOT to take over, or LEAD. We lead by serving, not by commanding or regulating. Mature saints know how the Holy Spirit leads and if you really want the younger saints to share then it is important to take a backseat and not Lord over God's sheep. I often envision Paul taking a backseat in fellowships and just acting as an overseer, desiring others to grow and share. When you come together, your time together is only as rich and meaningful as the individual lives are in the Lord. What I am trying to say, is that if people are seeking the Lord and walking close with Him apart from your gatherings, then when you all come together, your times will be rich with God speaking to you through all the members. This is what you want. One man cannot contain all that God wants to say to a church. It is very important not to tell people what to do, but to show people by example what to do.

For difference between example and example and why I am using it this way, see post #10

[https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id=51860&forum=48&start=20&viewmode=flat&order](https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=51860&forum=48&start=20&viewmode=flat&order)

=1

Most "meetings" (I will say meetings because that is what they are), are over regulated and people end up feeling like they are being lectured to or they feel like they have no part to play in the gathering/meeting. Of course, in Christ they have a big part to play but man and his fleshly ways oftentimes communicates to others that what they have to say is not important. Even men with the best of intentions will communicate this when they bogart meeting after meeting after meeting. But, that is what meetings are for, not so with a family. Think about raising a family that way. The children will count the days when they can leave.

We always open up with singing, not because it is a rule or anything like that, but simply because we all feel led to come into His presence with singing. It is within our time of praising and worshipping that the Lord moves on hearts and anything can happen. Someone will offer a psalm, or some other word, another song, or a testimony or a prayer. We all endeavor to be sensitive to how the Spirit is moving and oftentimes the word that is brought will cause others to add to it.

Coming from Institutional Religion many feel the need (because it is what they know) to have a speaker ready, or to have a Bible study ready when what really needs to happen is for the Holy Spirit to minister to people's hearts. We don't want others to feel comfortable to taking a back seat but at the same time we don't push anyone into participating. We try by our conduct (which is love) to encourage one another to share the good things that God has deposited in their life. We all need that. He has distributed wisdom and gifts throughout the Body.

Quote:  
-----Recently, in our Friday night group, we set aside Multiply. We said, "Let's do this. Let's go to the book of Acts. Let's sit here with our Bibles open, let's pray, let's all ask the Lord to be the head of our meeting, let's invite and ask the Holy Spirit to exercise any and all of the gifts of the Spirit in any one or more or all of us and let's yield and submit to one another as we read, discuss and study. Let's share the floor. Let's not look to any one of us as THE leader, THE teacher. Let's learn from the Lord."  
-----

Amen!

Quote:  
-----What I'm asking for is some help with the meeting format. I'm being asked -- and this is something I'm not comfortable with -- to "cast vision" about what we're doing.  
-----

Brother, there is no meeting format! Do you have children? Did you have a format for everyday relational activities? Your vision is simply Christ. It is always Christ, nothing else, nothing more. It is the Lord Himself that will spawn ministries within your midst but even your ministry will always be to Him. It is very important to always keep your time together Christocentric and this only happens as a body WHEN it is happening as an individual.

Quote:  
----- Honestly, I can do that with my wife, but this is something that is being "birthed" in us over long periods of time and hours and hours of conversation and prayer. I could easily put together a speech, but I don't want to!! :) I want the Lord to do His own explaining, I guess. (?) I guess I just don't want some pre-determined need for a vision casting to trump the activity of the Holy Spirit. It almost feels to me like Israel doing a census -- and I know that doesn't make a lick of sense, but that's the internal "gnawing" I get when I think of trying to formulate this for someone else's consumption. And, maybe it is just that -- the idea that I've got to explain something for someone else to "consume" and "get it" -- that strikes me as counter-intuitive about how the Lord is moving.  
-----

Again, no need to tell people what to do, or to regulate, just be an ensample of a Christocentric brother. More is caught than taught and people will see with their spiritual eyes. The Lord will do His explaining through your example.

Quote:  
-----What I'm fishing for more than anything is simply a description of what the meeting looks like. I think that simply describing what we are doing and why is sufficient. I don't have a 'vision', per se, at least not in the way that word has come to be used in church circles in recent years. It is attaching a spiritual term to a fleshly idea, it implies a plan. You can't plan an inferno. We want the fire of God to consume US, not make Him digestible.

le for someone else to consume.  
-----

You are answering your own questions and I want to confirm you are spot on. The "meeting" looks like no other "meeting". It shouldn't, why would we want it to?

Quote:  
-----So, as rambling as this is and as vague as I've stated it, I'm asking for some help on describing what Gospel Fellowship meetings ARE. I'm not going to use the phrase "gospel fellowship" as I discuss with others. This is not a program. If it is, then I either need to be moved on to see the need for a program or I need to stop altogether. We've had enough programs. All of us. We need the Lord and His power and His truth to sustain us in the days and years to come. This is the last days....but now I'm preaching to the choir, I suppose.

Your prayerful input appreciated.  
-----

You sound like you are well on your way. Love people. Re-read the parables and notice all the different ways that Jesus got together with people and brought them into relationship with Him. Just as all families (which should be relational) are different and exude a unique personality, each fellowship will exude a unique fellowship based on the personalities involved, yet accented by the character of Christ. He does not obliterate our personalities.

Be encouraged to let people enjoy the Liberty of Christ and if something bothers you about someone's personality, don't ever make it an issue. Everyone is at a different stage in life with Christ. What you want more than anything else is not a well regulated meeting, but a healthy, loving fellowship where Christ is the center, not doctrine, not miracles, not great preaching or teaching or even great praying. These all may in time be part of your fellowship as by products but never the CENTER. What I am hearing from your heart and what you want more than anything is the REALITY of Christ, and the Love of Christ in each member's life. In short, a loving family, of people that are fiercely devoted to Jesus. Being around people like that just makes for a wonderful fellowship of Believers.

**Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2014/3/26 14:11**

Quote:  
-----I've read some of the Principles book. Frankly, and I mean this as a self-critique and not a slight of the work in the book, I find it very difficult to read through the whole thing. I've asked here for any help on a more condensed laying out of what the vision is for Gospel Fellowship meetings. So far, the Principles book remains --- as far as I know --- the resource for that here.  
-----

Dear brother,

Excellent thoughts, testimony and questions. Though there are certain biblical patterns of church meetings such as 1 Corinthians 14. We still need to be open to how the Holy Spirit is leading in each area. If there are certain strong gifting in the body in one local area that gifting might be used more to help the body. Such as a teaching gift in a brother etc. Also a meeting where saints are gathering that has no Eldership at all can look more like a brotherhood where each person gives their thoughts and prayers to God and it is weighed what each person says. Where meetings where more mature Eldership is there they can help judge and discern some of the things shared and offer corrective words if necessary as the Spirit leads them. Such authority is important and God uses this for the balance and order of a meeting at times.

In the end I believe the meeting is not an end in itself. In our Western mind-set we are trying to find out how the best meeting can run and how it can be done perfectly biblical. Such a desire has a value and is good but can end in spiritual selfishness. If one considers just part of the passage of 1 Corinthians 14 where it says each should bring a word then it can become the entire goal of each individual to get to share their "word" and if they don't then they feel like they are not contributing to the meeting. Or not pleasing God etc. But what is more important is the daily denying of self, and discipleship of each person. So the meeting is good and we need maybe not even just 1 meeting a week but the more important thing is that every member of the body is living a life of true discipleship with Jesus Christ every hour of all the week.

In the principles book here is a portion that sort of speaks to this:

We should also be very open to God's leading in different local areas and not prescribe one style or method of meeting to be exactly replicated. Though there are principles and commands<sup>101</sup> that all gatherings should exactly keep the same.<sup>102</sup> Yet there were differences in the way believers met, which one can see in the Book of Acts and Epistles. Some examples can be meetings where one brother teaches,<sup>103</sup> meetings where all share,<sup>104</sup> gatherings where there are prophets,<sup>105</sup> gatherings where there are strong teachers.<sup>106</sup> Also in some places the believers met daily in areas,<sup>107</sup> in others they met each day for a teaching, in others prayer meetings,<sup>108</sup> in others unbelievers were present,<sup>109</sup> and in others they practiced the Lord's Supper.<sup>110</sup> Thus we see a wonderful variety of meetings and we should not demand all Assemblies to meet and form in one fashion. We can rejoice with all types of gathering. Perhaps one gathering of believers has one mature brother that teaches mostly compared to another Assembly where every meeting all are encouraged to prophesy. There should be no standard especially in times of persecution. God's Spirit will lead in many different ways. In the underground Church in China primarily one brother will teach yet many are sent out as missionaries. It would be more fruitful in many countries to see this happen then simply a meeting where all get to share something but no missionaries are sent out. Such a meeting can just end in spiritual selfishness and self-importance rather than self-denial and humility.

from: <http://www.gospelfellowships.net/pdf/principle5.pdf>

In the end if we had a meeting where all were sharing, there were Elders but they were not imposing strongly on the body and allowing many in the body to function yet no one was speaking of the Gospel during the week and there were no new souls being added to the Church, in my consideration that would be a bad meeting to be involved in. When our Lord comes back and those same 10 people have been meeting for 20 years with no new growth I do not believe the Lord would be pleased with this.

The Church is not like a worldly franchise where all things look the same. yet there are some basic principle and biblical traditions that should carry over into all the assemblies of God's people.

I hope some of my comments are constructive and helpful.

**Re: , on: 2014/3/26 15:18**

And this is where the example of mature believers (who are by spiritual nature, elders) comes into play. When you have strong mature examples that don't always think they need to speak, then you don't end up having a fellowship where everyone thinks they need to speak (get their "word" in). Like parents and children, members of a body of believers draw their example from the mature believers.

It is quite amazing to behold how the Holy Spirit can keep a gathering of Believers walking in a way that prefers one another which pleases the Lord. This is vital to allowing the Lord to choose freely who He WANTS to speak a word through. We really need to prefer the Lord and wait on His Spirit to impress us.

I just wanted to say this because I don't want to give the impression that everyone needs to speak or that mature believers are not elders. We just don't call anyone by a title and organically speaking, we know who the elders are, just like children know who their big sister, big brother, mother and father, aunts and uncles are. Also, elders don't always need to "impose" themselves on other adults. Let people learn from mistakes.

Dolfan can correct us and I hope he does. I did not think by "pattern" he was speaking about traditions like the Lord's Supper, but was really asking what the meeting looked like in terms of how it was "conducted."

There are sometimes bad meetings, but it does not mean they are bad to be in, because that is how you learn what a good

od meeting is. We learn very much by our mistakes and we all must be extended the liberty to make mistakes so we learn how not to gather, and how to function under the Headship of Christ. Don't think you will always have good gatherings. You won't, but there is a wealth of knowledge and wisdom you can learn from "bad" gatherings. You don't always need an "elder" correcting you. It is a much better example to show love. Remember, Love covers a multitude of sins. Whatever you do, strive not to be religious.

So, I mention some good things to do, and Greg mentioned things not to do. Has any of this helped you dolfan?

**Re: , on: 2014/3/26 15:42**

dolfan,

It occurred to me that you can already see from this thread that the group personality of a local body of believers will be different from other groups. Some groups actually like more regulation and more structure in the form of pre-planned teachings or teachers. There is nothing wrong with this. But, each independent gathering must not try to quench the spirit of other gatherings. If more people weigh in, I am confident that you will see various "patterns" emerge with no one pattern being the way that "it should be done". Some may open in prayer while others open in worship. Some may close in worship, while others may close in prayer. Some believe the Lord's Supper is a ceremony, while others believe it is the full meal after the time of worship and praise. I personally think it is the full meal, but I am in a fellowship where it is a ceremony with a sip of grape juice or wine and a morsel of bread. That's fine,,I can go with that and have. It is the spiritual significance that is important. No one knows that I think it is a full meal, because that is a non-essential to me and I don't want to seem ungrateful or dissatisfied. Because, in the end, I am satisfied...with Jesus.

**Re: - posted by brothagary, on: 2014/3/26 16:12**

I know the feeling to want to be apart of the new testament pattern of fellowship ,operation as a fundamentally spontaneous body ,,,,,,, I was watching a 12 part conference that John Wimber over saw in 1985 that operated with unction and order but was spontaneous,, it was a sings and wonders conference ,,prophecy ,,exhortation, teaching and words of knowledge ,tongues and worship with strong display of tears and repentance in the last part of the conference ,,it was good to see the holy spirit moving like this in a group setting ,,I dare say I'll be watching it again with jealousy

blessings

**Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2014/4/1 15:42**

I delayed in responding to your responses for no particular reason!! :)

Seriously, I truly appreciate the views and opinions and I agree with them. You all have understood my poorly worded question better than I expressed it! I take your words with confidence and we press forward this Friday night.

Very eager to see, over time, how the Lord works in these gatherings. Very HOPEFUL to see people equipped and zealous to win others to Him, and also hopeful that the Holy Spirit will work mightily in lost people in answer to our cries for them to be saved. Becoming ever more convinced that the only things worthy of doing are those that require much prayer, and that much prayer is required to redeem the time well.

**Re: - posted by Sree (), on: 2014/4/2 2:12**

I have not run a church, I am not equipped to write principles. God has not called a Church to only create missionaries, those who write principles based on evangelism are only focusing on one part of Gospel. The main purpose of a Church to raise up disciples. The disciples who will find God's burden and act accordingly rather than those men who find the need in world and act accordingly. There is a big difference in doing what God wants us to do and doing what we think needs to be done. Disciple of Jesus is like an angel in Heaven, who directly hears from God and acts according to what God wants. For example God wanted an angel to appear before Mary and he did it. The angel did not run here and there searching for women before whom it can appear.

Regarding meetings, I attend a fellowship. We have both weekly meeting and Sunday meetings. There is a pattern to all our meetings, yet we also let the Holy Spirit to freely control. I have also been to meetings where there is no pattern at all and they let anyone to speak and anyone to pray at any time, without any boundary on time. To me I have found less interest in attending such meetings where there is no pattern or leadership. So my thoughts here are based on my personal experience which I find very close with Bible.

Paul to Corinthians says that the meeting should be in Order in 1 Cor 14. He gives a pattern but above all he tries to put an order. Our God is a God of Order. He was very specific about the tabernacle he wanted to dwell. He did not ask Moses to make whatever measurement that he was let to make. So Church is also the same way. When we meet there should be someone leading a meeting, with a specific agenda. Something like one brother sharing for a specified amount of time then those who have revelation can share in similar line. Some prayer for things that are already well known to all those who have gathered. Brothers can pray in any order but with a specific time in mind. It should not be like we pray for hours until the last brother leaves. There should be an order or pattern. The pattern can be anything like what Brother Gregg suggested, based on the kind of Gift seen among brothers. But there should be a pattern that everyone should adhere to.

Finally do not see the fruit of your fellowship in number of people who attend it. God is not at all interested in numbers. He warned David not to number his soldiers. It is God's Church he adds and he removes people. If your focus is on numbers then you will sometime be forced to bend for the sake of pleasing the numbers. Jesus was never concerned about disciples being added or leaving. He in fact offered the 12 with an option to leave him.