

**General Topics :: Open mic gathers - pros and cons****Open mic gathers - pros and cons - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 11:16**

Was wondering what kind of experiences people on SI have had in open mic approaches to public gatherings. An example of this would be: Everyone has gathered for a service, someone reads a passage of scripture (perhaps an entire epistle) and then there is opportunity for people to share and exhort one another from what was read - they may expound on a particular verse, share something that they felt the Lord quicken within them as the scripture was being read or someone might share a testimony as it pertains to the scripture that was read. The basic idea, I guess, is this: the multiplicity of the "body" has an opportunity to be used by the Spirit in exhortation, as opposed to one man exhorting from scripture every week.

I'm not suggesting this as a standard for every gathering, but asking if anyone has seen this sort of approach bear fruit when used occasionally? I'm mindful of the fact that you open yourself up to the possibility that someone might (and probably will at some point) share ideas that do not line up with sound doctrine, but if the leadership of the church (elders, pastor, etc.) are there operating as moderators in a sense, they should be able to bring balance or correction to anything that is shared.

I think of Titus 4:13 and particularly the passage in 1 Corinthians 14:26-33, with verse 29 saying, "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment." It could be health for a body of believers to listen to and examine what others are saying, even if not everyone who shares does so from a perfect doctrinal position. Verse 31 of 1 Cor. 14 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted." Maybe having this kind of fellowship service at times could be a great training ground for people to develop and be recognized in their giftings to teach or exhort. Thinking of trying this with our church, but wanted to hear any pros or cons before doing so.

I believe this is at the heart of many "cell group" meetings, but I'm asking about it's functionality in the congregational setting of a church that has between 150 and 200 attendees.

**Re: Open mic gathers - pros and cons - posted by White\_Stone (), on: 2009/1/10 12:47**

Hello graceamazed,

Quote:  
-----I believe this is at the heart of many "cell group" meetings, but I'm asking about it's functionality in the congregational setting of a church that has between 150 and 200 attendees.  
-----

That is too large a group to be able to allow complete Epistles to be read. Especially, to even allow feedback on any specific verse. The ones who do not get to voice their opinion will be forced into the background, probably even further than they were before the 'open mike' event. For they may be timid about speaking up and by the time they may gain the courage to speak, the event is over. Then they may feel doomed to failure, as their voice is never heard. The whole congregation may suffer loss because that one voice may have brought illumination to the subject. The one's who always speak out will be boldest and possibly 'take over' the mike.

Things must be done in an orderly fashion. I feel this is for the preservation of the weaker members and the sanity of all others.

This is in my humble opinion, of course. Hopefully, there may be others who have actually experienced something like this who may contribute.

Kind regards,  
white stone

**Re: Open mic gathers - pros and cons - posted by Heydave (), on: 2009/1/10 12:56**

Quote:  
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Quote:  
-----I believe this is at the heart of many "cell group" meetings, but I'm asking about its functionality in the congregational setting of a church that has between 150 and 200 attendees.  
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This is what is commonly called 'body ministry' and was very much in evidence during the 70's and early 80's in the 'house church' movement here in the UK. In fact the first church I was part of after being saved was a house church that operated in this way. This church was about 50 people at the most, but I also visited others that had 100 - 150 people. The format was no front led worship and no front led worship. There are still a number of churches around that are structured this way and Philologos's (forum member) church local to me does have this structure.

I suggest that you visit the forum on 'Who is responsible for this state of affairs?' as the subject of church structure is being discussed and was started by philologos. Not exactly in this detail, but it is looking at the structure of church leadership etc. If you read back through the threads you will get a good idea.

How does it work? I think Philologos would be better placed to answer as he is actively involved in this type of church. From my experience it was good if you had a sound eldership that was able to correct error in a sensitive way. The only thing that it may lack is a sound exposition of the word of God as you would get from a sermon. That said, I have heard many a sermon that was nothing but wind and sand, so that is no guarantee! This could be offset by a separate bible teaching night.

Also the emphasis is on allowing the Holy Spirit to minister through the body, each one as he is led. This pre-supposes that people are correctly being prompted by the Spirit and as is often the case people think they are more than they really are.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 13:49**

Just to say I am happy to be part of this discussion. :-)  
I think it is not absolutely the size which determines things but the make up of the meeting. If the meeting is an extended family which has grown over time 200 would be close to a maximum but this pattern cannot be imposed on a gathering. If the folks have 'grown up' together and know the pattern this can and does work. These people would know the 'eldership' and be sensitive to their input too.

If you have a meeting which is constituted mainly of 'strangers' this would be almost impossible. It is because we have meetings of strangers that we have to resort to 'formal' patterns of authority.

We had a Christmas family gathering of about 20 people. Everyone knew everyone. Everyone knew each other's character and were tolerant of each other. If you get 20 strangers in a room someone will appoint himself 'leader'.

**General Topics :: Open mic gathers - pros and cons**

**Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/1/10 14:11**

Quote:

-----It is because we have meetings of strangers that we have to resort to 'formal' patterns of authority.  
-----

And I think the inverse can also be true; because we often resort to formal patterns of authority many congregations remain meetings of strangers.

MC

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 14:27**

Quote:

-----And I think the inverse can also be true; because we often resort to formal patterns of authority many congregations remain meetings of strangers.  
-----

This is quite true. I was meeting with a brother from our church this morning and he referenced a lady in our body that prayed a corporate prayer last week for her son. My friend was very blessed by her prayer, but couldn't remember her name and didn't really know her beyond the level of acquaintance, though they've been sitting 15' from each other every week for 3 or 4 years! My heart was quickened all the more to seek God on how we could effectively allow the members of the body to function in their gifts and callings within the Sunday morning setting and not require them to only participate and grow in fellowship within the "home group" settings of 8 to 15 people. We have home groups and the people that participate really grow close to those dozen or so in their home group, but still know relatively little about the other 140 that they worship next to every week.

**Re: - posted by White\_Stone (), on: 2009/1/10 14:39**

Hello graceamazed,

Quote:

-----We have home groups and the people that participate really grow close to those dozen or so in their home group, but still know relatively little about the other 140 that they worship next to every week.  
-----

Why not talk with the ones participating in the home groups and see if they would be open to setting up a traveling style group. Ask as many in the Church as would care to participate to sign up and then assign them into groups and each month switch the membership of the groups around. Then every so often, aside from the normal weekly Lord's Day worship service, get together as one large group. Or some format along those lines that encourages interaction with every member with every other member to some extent throughout the entire year. Sounds good on paper, I think. :-) Just takes a good game plan to lay out the beginning groups (think of that as lots of group prayer).

Kindly,  
white stone

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 14:42**

Quote:

-----If you have a meeting which is constituted mainly of 'strangers' this would be almost impossible.  
-----

One thought that comes to mind as it pertains to strangers in these settings would be what we see in 1 Cor. 14:24-25, "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you." Perhaps, if the body of Christ was operating in a fuller participation of spiritual gifts, then we might see that strangers might be impacted in a powerful way by the Spirit of God.

Again, Acts 13:15 illustrates how Paul and his companions entered into the synagogue on the sabbath and listened to the reading of the Law and Prophets, then were asked to give a word of exhortation to the people, if they had one. They were strangers, and yet there was an openness for them to share in the assembly as well.

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 14:58**

Quote:

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Thanks for sharing White\_Stone. In the past, we've put a heavy emphasis on home group meetings, hoping to foster some of the deeper fellowship and participation that we're talking about in this thread. We've had many different approaches and structures to our home groups, including something similar to what you were describing - we structured the groups, assigned those who wanted to participate to a given group and then, after a period of time, reassigned participants to another group, so everyone could get to know and fellowship with different members. It sounded great to us on paper, but we found that it didn't work that well in practice (perhaps it would with a different body of believers?).

We've since gotten away from structuring the home groups and have allowed them to grow more organically and have a few very thriving groups, however, they encompass only a fraction of the people who meet with us on Sunday mornings. We always find ourselves saying, "I wish we could do 'this' on Sunday mornings." Perhaps there's a way we can, not by eliminating expository preaching and teaching, but by allowing some services where we operate in a more community fashion.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 15:36**

Quote:

-----Again, Acts 13:15 illustrates how Paul and his companions entered into the synagogue on the sabbath and listened to the reading of the Law and Prophets, then were asked to give a word of exhortation to the people, if they had one. They were strangers, and yet there was an openness for them to share in the assembly as well.  
-----

There was but it is plain that Paul was given particular permission and usually invited to speak. I am not sure this is what an 'open mike' suggests. How do you think the leader of the synagogue would have responded if Paul had suddenly started prophesying? ;-)

In fact the 'open mike' is showing us that we really have already outgrown the kind of pattern that was most familiar in the New Testament period. We actually use a mobile-mike in our meetings. If someone begins to prophesy or gives a testimony they just stand up and make a start. Within a second or two someone will drape a radio mike on a string around their neck. The prophecy or testimony is then audible for the whole meeting and, through an audio loop, to folks with hearing aids. It is very unobtrusive.

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 15:58**

Quote:  
-----There was but it is plain that Paul was given particular permission and usually invited to speak. I am not sure this is what an 'open mike' suggests. How do you think the leader of the synagogue would have responded if Paul had suddenly started prophesying?  
-----

I agree, there must be certainly be order and everything must be done as unobtrusive as possible. I've participated for a time with a few separate ministries that pretty much take a true "open mic" approach - they have people that would lead in worship, but after that, the team sits down and there is literally an open mic for anyone that has a "word" from the Lord to share. Not only this, but they do not believe in "setting in order" or recognizing individuals as elders or authorities. My experience was that this was very unproductive, as you had all sorts of things being shared, but no one bring balance or correction to what people were saying. These experiences have given me a bad taste for even thinking about opening up much opportunity for others to freely share.

My thought would be something along the lines of this: Romans 8 is read in its entirety, before which I might have given some contextual explanation, but after which I might propose some questions to the congregation such as, "What does the Apostle mean by 'for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live'?" Or I might simply open up a general question of, "Was there a portion out of what we just read that the Spirit of God might have quickened within you that you'd like to comment on or share with us?" Keeping more of a dialogue atmosphere between me and whoever might be sharing - I would maintain my microphone and a separate one would be given to whomever might be sharing at the time.

**Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2009/1/10 16:35**

Quote:  
-----graceamazed on 2009/1/10 17:58:37  
Keeping more of a dialogue atmosphere between me and whoever might be sharing - I would maintain my microphone and a separate one would be given to whomever might be sharing at the time.  
-----

Is this what we mean by an 'open mike'? This is not what I had in mind. This is a dialogue type meeting and probably the way that Paul functioned in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus. This was an established form of teaching that philosophers used. Paul is using a 'culturally appropriate' form of evangelism.

I think this 'model' is useful in many contexts but it was not what I had in mind for an 'open mike' setting. I had more of a Corinthians 'model' in mind. I don't think that either of these 'models' is better than another. They are just different settings with different purposes in mind.

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 16:48**

Quote:  
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-----

By "open mic" I mean, in a broad sense, the opportunity for any individual in the body to share what the Lord has quickened within them during the service. Somehow opening up the service for more than only the "pastor" to exhort the body. I am open to any edifying way of doing this, be it in accordance with one of the examples I gave or another way that someone might suggest as having been fruitful for them.

**General Topics :: Open mic gathers - pros and cons**

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/1/10 19:24**

I have been involved in several house church meetings that were orderly and edifying.

Usually, songs are sung as people kind of "settle in". Then, one of the men will share an expository teaching from the Scripture (anywhere from 10-30 minutes). Then, the men will discuss and ask questions, staying away from rabbit trails. After that, another man may suggest a song, or another man may share a teaching. Eventually, someone will begin distributing the bread for the Lord's supper, and then the cup.

There weren't any obvious leaders in the middle of the meeting, however, obviously, some men stand out as being more gifted teachers than others. The elders of the group are there to spiritually guide the flock, stand against false doctrine, be a godly example, and generally help the flocks growth.

After the meeting, they usually had more casual fellowship and a meal.

With care in Christ,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by graceamazed (), on: 2009/1/10 19:41**

Hi Taylor. How well do you think that approach would work with a group of 150-200 gathered? They're a great group of believers who really do hunger for the Word of God and are open-minded to seeing the Spirit move among us.

**Re: - posted by TaylorOtwell (), on: 2009/1/10 19:54**

Hi Friend,

Honestly, I don't think it would work that well. With that large of a group, perhaps it could be multiplied out geographically into smaller groups that could meet regularly, while gathering all 150-200 together on a more occasional basis? Maybe plot where the families live on a map of the city and see if there are some obvious lines that could break things into smaller groups. Obviously, you will want several strong, elder qualified men in each group.

With care in Christ,  
Taylor

**Re: - posted by ginnyrose (), on: 2009/1/11 8:44**

Quote:  
-----My friend was very blessed by her prayer, but couldn't remember her name and didn't really know her beyond the level of acquaintance, though they've been sitting 15' from each other every week for 3 or 4 years!  
-----

Oh, my! this is hard to believe, although I am not accusing you of lying. Maybe y'all should have some fellowship meals, involving the men in setting things up and clean up afterward. In other words, give people responsibilities where there is a literal working together to get a job done. This is the way we do it in our church...the men set up tables, chairs and assist in the clean-up - and they get to run the vacuum cleaner!! :-)

ginnyrose

**Re: "open mike" meetings and true freedom, on: 2009/1/11 10:09**

Another way of saying body ministry. I am thrilled that some even consider this as the direction we must go, as many have come to realize that our present system of the professional Pastor and church corporations and organized denominations, are a dismal failure.

Truthfully, for all of us who have even limited experience in this, we all know how fast this can descend into Chaos. Big woman, high hair, prophesying loudly about the most spiritual of things, and absolutely off the wall, or well

**General Topics :: Open mic gathers - pros and cons**

intentioned babes wanting to prove their depth in similar ways.

I like what Philo said about the organic meeting and trust. If we know those who labor among us, and their character, then YES!...the body edifies itself in Love. If we are a group of strangers, then the structure of the meeting changes nothing. Ego's rule, along with dogma, emotional whims, and the inevitable hijacker. The Lord will be quenched, or limited at best.

I believe the answer dovetails perfectly with the "current state of affairs" thread. 1..Establishing true and spiritual Eldership. The Lord has given gifts to all in the Church, and true function in meetings should allow everyone that the Lord wants to use to be used. However, there is such a thing as "carnal" people, and the immature. The community precedes the meeting. The church is a house of friends, and with real commitment, this can grow to even love.. This can be done with churches in the many thousands. It was proven after Pentecost, in Jerusalem...and many Pauline church plants.

I think a key IS the smaller meeting. "they met house to house"...great joy...breaking of bread. Along with Godly discipline, and the Lord's involvement and a church that will enforce it, you will have holiness. Along with Apostolic teaching of loving the least as the most or greatest...the church will learn to love one another in reality.

3 We must abandon numbers as our standard of success. It is absolutely useless to the Lord. Numbers mean nothing, and we must destroy the model of the paid professional that lives off the tithe. These people will always feel obligated and qualified to lead everything. We must become a family for this type of church to function. We joy together; we weep together. When one rejoices we all do, when one weeps, we all do.

Larger, "corporate meetings" cannot be as free, and probably used for revelation from some of the smaller meetings, worship and praise, and more select "larger words" that the Lord would make clear.

Again, the Lord would bear witness to the Elders, but favor the body as a whole.

We are on a journey. This will probably begin to happen, when we need the Lord to rescue us, and realize we need each other to survive...as we would need our mother and father, and love our own children.

just some thoughts,,Tom