

A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLES **“The Encouragement of Testimony”**

A Dichotomy of Inspiration and Order-

Acts 2:42

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. NKJV

We have used this verse to springboard our way into a proposed order of worship. In the whole debate over the order of worship, some have argued for no order at all. They contend that the total content of church interaction in the New Testament was inspirational with no formal structure. Some even go so far as to find fault with the practice of teaching and preaching, arguing that it comes against spontaneity.

In my view, the core of these arguments isn't really history or biblical examination but emotion. For some, the very presence of a predetermined order or forethought of any kind stifles inspiration. Their fear is that a plan or order of worship would quench the Spirit (1 Thes. 5:19).

This argument is a classic example of either/or thinking. In other words, a meeting is either inspirational (and spontaneous) or predetermined and orderly. It cannot be both. I disagree. God has foreknowledge and a plan and yet He still inspired His Word to be written. So, obviously, one can have a move of the Spirit and order as well. For an example of this, we need go no farther than the account of creation where the Spirit of God brought order to chaos!

1 Cor 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.” KJV

The Greek word used in the text for decently is euschemonus. This word is a compound word made up of eu, which means “well”, and schema, which means “form.” It is from the Greek word schema that we get the English word scheme, which means “a systematic plan of action.” The Lord says that all things in the Church should be done in good form, or with decorum. But at the base of that statement is a plan!

Not only are things to be done decently, they are to be done in order as well. This is the Greek word taxis in the text. It means “a regular arrangement.” In medicine, this word taxis is transliterated into the English and means “the moving of an organ, as in a dislocation or hernia, into normal position by manipulation.”

When we assemble as a church, we are to do things with proper decorum and according to a regular arrangement. Doing this will not only help us not get dislocated, it may even establish some members into their proper place in the body! Order does not quench the Spirit. Quite the opposite, confusion does. The real dichotomy is not inspiration vs. order. It is legalism vs. being led by the Spirit of God.

Be Prepared-

What are some of the things we are to do decently and in order?

1 Cor 14:26

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. NIV

You may have read this verse in the past and thought that it was a reproof to the Corinthian church. It is not. The phrase “what then shall we say?” is an idiom meaning “what then is our proper course of action?”

1 Cor 14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. NIV

The Apostle Paul is instructing the Corinthian church on what to do when they come together.

1 Cor 14:26 The Message

“So here’s what I want you to do. When you gather for worship, **each one of you be prepared** with something that will be useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight.”

All things must be done to edify the church. This takes preparation and consideration.

Heb 10:23-25

23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. NIV

We do not want to forsake the assembly, where we can encourage one another and provoke each other to love and good works. To do this, verse 24 says that we must consider to provoke and thus encourage.

1. Consider – means to give careful attention

Acts 11:5-6

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 Upon the which **when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered**, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. KJV

It is interesting to note how Peter processed this revelation. He saw a vision. Then he gazed intently into it. And then he considered it, fixed his mind on it. He was intently focused on what the Lord was showing him. We need to focus on one another’s lives for the purpose of encouraging them.

2. Provoke – from the Greek we get the English paroxysm “a sudden outburst of emotion or action.”

*The only other place this particular word is used is Acts 15:39 where the **contention** between Barnabas and Paul was so sharp that they split up! The verb form shows up in 1 Corinthians 13.*

1 Cor 13:5 KJV

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not **easily provoked**, thinketh no evil;

Hebrews tells us that we must consider each other how we can provoke each other to love and good works. 1 Corinthians 13:5 tells us plainly that love is not provoked very easily. This is why it takes focused concentration on how we are to go about it!

3. Exhort – to come along side and urge one to follow a certain course of action.

A. Prophecy

1 Cor 14:29-31

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. KJV

B. Sharing comfort

2 Cor 1:3-6

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

5 For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. NIV

C. Giving testimony

1 John 1:1-3

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. NIV

The Power of Testimony

Rev 12:11

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. NIV

Testimonies are overcoming!

The Purpose of Testimony

What is the purpose of testimony in a court of law? To confirm a matter.

2 Cor 13:1

This will be my third visit to you. "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." NIV

The word translated "matter" is the Greek word rhema. A rhema is a word – that portion of the Word spoken to us to give us life (John 6:63). I really like the way Mr. Gothard put it at the Pastor's Conference in Knoxville. I'm paraphrasing:

"A rhema is not something for me, but what I can do for God. Faith comes by hearing. God says what we can do, and thus we have faith to do it."

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,

27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.

31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.

36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

37 **For nothing [rhema] is impossible with God."**

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. NIV

The rhema of God to her life dealt with her life but primarily had to do with His plan of redemption. Let us not forget that it is always about Him!

As Christ's rhemas in our lives are confirmed and established by the testimony of witnesses, our faith grows. We can testify to answered prayer, applied truth, deliverance and victory.

Some Guidelines for Testimony

I. A Testimony Must Exalt Christ – Not Just and Experience

- II. A Testimony Must Edify Other Believers – Not simply Entertain
- III. A Testimony Must Promote Unity – Not Divisive Doctrines
- IV. A Testimony Must be Positive and Uplifting – Not Discouraging
- V. A Testimony Must be Discreet and Appropriate – Not Defrauding
- VI. A Testimony Must Demonstrate Humility – Not a Superior Attitude
- VII. A Testimony Must be Specific and to the Point – Not Rambling