

Assembly Basics

Session 2: Our Basic Participation in an Assembly

1. CHARACTER OF PARTICIPATION - what is Assembly Fellowship?

- **What is Fellowship?** "to share in something with someone." Luke 5:10 "partners" in a fishing business. Fellowship is not always an easy thing.
- **Which Fellowship?** Acts 2:42 lit. "the fellowship" - Assembly fellowship something distinct. Family fellowship experienced by all true believers - 1 Jn 1:3 "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Extent of that community cannot be seen with the eye. Assembly fellowship a visible, local, tangible experience. In 1 Cor 10 three circles of fellowship in Corinth identified: Pagan ("fellowship" v20); Jewish ("partakers" v18); Assembly ("communion" v16). Assembly fellowship is a practical, visible, experiential sharing of the worship, witness, and work of Christ with likeminded believers.

2. CLARITY AS TO PARTICIPATION - who is in Assembly Fellowship?

- **Clarity is a Priority:** Ought to be clarity not confusion. Paul refers to a "within" and "without" of the Assembly (1 Cor 5:14). Those within accountable to the other believers and the Lord. The Assembly has no jurisdiction over those not part of the fellowship.
- **Clarity is Practical:** Paul refers to three types of people in the main gathering of the Corinthians (1 Cor 14:23): "unbelievers", "the whole church" and the "unlearned". Not that the "unlearned" intellectually deficient or not saved but rather they are yet to learn certain truths before committing to Assembly Fellowship. The "unlearned" are occupying "the room of unlearned" (1 Cor 14:16, 23). Some think "room" describes their situation not location. When Paul uses the word "room" in every other occurrence he means an actual location, or place. Wisely, this is demonstrated visibly at the Breaking of Bread where those not in Assembly Fellowship have distinct seating.

3. CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION - who can be in Assembly Fellowship?

- **The Requirements:** A timing for fellowship: after Salvation and Baptism (Acts 2:41-42). Tests for fellowship: (1) **Salvation** - are you saved and baptised? (Acts 2:41; 9:26); (2) **Separation** - are you living in sin? (1 Cor 5); (3) **Scriptures** - are you willing to submit to the Apostle's Teaching? (Acts 2:42); (4) **Sincerity** - are your intentions honourable? (Acts 20:28-31).
- **The Reception:** Advice should be given by the elders, but ultimately the Assembly makes the decision as to a person's reception (Acts 15:4; 18:27; Rom 16:2).
- **The Responsibilities:** Assembly fellowship a privilege: commemorate (Acts 2:42), contribute (1 Cor 12:14-27), care (Heb 13:17). Privileges go with responsibilities. Cannot be part of the Assembly and participate in things incompatible (1 Cor 10:21-23).

4. CALENDAR FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING - when does the Assembly gather?

- **The Programme:** Seven meetings of the Assembly: (i) Breaking of Bread (Acts 20:7); (ii) Teaching Meeting (Acts 2:42; Bible Reading Acts 20:7 "converse"); (iii) Prayer Meeting (1 Tim 2:1); (iv) Gospel Meeting (Acts 18:7-11 - Paul 18 months in house of Justus, gathering for teaching with emphasis on unbelievers, Sunday School same with emphasis on children); (v) Report Meeting (Acts 14:26-28); (vi) Elders Meeting (Acts 20:17-only sectionalised gathering found in NT); (vii) Discipline Meeting (1 Cor 5:4-5).

5. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THOSE PARTICIPATING - what to put into the Assembly?

- **The Plan:** (i) Preaching (Acts 13:1) plurality of men, not one man or any man; (ii) Praying (1 Tim 2:8) males audibly on behalf of assembly; (iii) Praise (1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19) whole assembly together; (iv) Pecuniary (1 Cor 16:1-3) voluntarily setting aside finances for the work and people of God each Lord's day; (v) Private - praying, visiting, encouraging, organising, helping, providing, cleaning, caring - the Lord's secret service!

6. COMPASSION AMONG THOSE PARTICIPATING - what attitude to the Assembly?

- **A Pattern:** Acts 2:44-47. In the first Assembly they were not strangers but lived as family. Affected them (i) Financially; (ii) Domestically; (iii) Socially.
- **A Picture:** 1 Cor 12 pictures Assembly as a body: (v14-19) **Problem of Jealousy:** (i) Not having certain gift does not make any less important member of the Assembly; (ii) If everyone one gift, how would things get done? (v20-26) **Problem of Pride:** (i) Cannot do without less prominent gifts; (ii) where one part not functioning affects all.

7. CONCLUDING PARTICIPATION - how does Assembly Fellowship end?

- **Commendation to a new Assembly:** Phoebe travelled from one area to another carrying a letter introducing her to the Assembly in the new place (Rom 16:1-2). Same occurs with Apollos (Acts 18:27). Not a "ticket" to break bread but information to assist the new Assembly in deciding whether to receive the person. Some people so well known to an Assembly that there is no need of a letter of introduction (2 Cor 3:1).
- **Condemnation by the Assembly:** It is necessary at times to remove a person from the fellowship. Reasons may include moral sin (1 Cor 5:3-5); holding false doctrine (1 Tim 1:20); failure to submit to Assembly discipline (Matt 18:17). This is the responsibility of the Assembly as a whole, not just the elders (1 Cor 5:4). Removal from the fellowship is with a view to repentance and restoration (1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 2:5-8).
- **Conclusion of the Assembly:** Assembly Fellowship will eventually give way to Heavenly Fellowship at death or the rapture (Rev 4:1). The rapture will usher in the first gathering of the church which is the body of Christ (1 Thess 4:16-7).