

For 2022 I believe it's important to focus on simplifying our times together and encouraging everyone to take part



What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 1 Corinthians 14:26

Simple Church and Thoughts for 2022

A couple of months ago, I frustratedly sat on our back porch in the midst of our house church meeting. I felt the weight of leading the group and realized I wasn't doing it very well. My son was cutting up next to me and seemed to be far away from thinking about God or spiritual things. It was then that something snapped. I thought, "I'm not supposed to be carrying this thing!" The Bible states that everyone is supposed to contribute to the congregational meeting. Although my motives were admittedly jaded, I wanted to turn the tables and put the pressure on my son and others in the group to more equitably contribute in our time together--it was an added bonus that the Bible seemed to validate this as the way things were supposed to be when Believers came together.

So, with a high degree of controlled and under-the-surface frustration, I read the 1 Corinthians 14:26 passage listed above about how everyone in the group would have something to give for the sake of edification or building up those in the group. I stated we were going to silently wait on the Holy Spirit and then we would go around the circle and that EVERYONE (adults and children) was going to share something. I added that if anyone had difficulty coming up with something to contribute, they could share something encouraging about someone else in the group. In so doing they would be edifying (building up) the group and would be hitting the heart of what was intended from this passage. The six children stared back at me with eyes wide with shock. Aha! Got em! They were going to have to share!

As we went around the circle something began to shift in the group. Folks were now more engaged because they were expected to contribute but also because they had more interest in hearing what someone other than me had to say. We've now done this consistently for two months in our group, and here are some observations I've seen:

- Usually it's what one of the children shares that is most impacting to me for the week. I still remember things that the children shared several weeks ago that are still very meaningful to me.
- By following this biblical pattern, the Holy Spirit is able to shift the group in unexpected ways. He knows what we most need and though I'm not always very good at hearing or following His lead, we are growing in this as we continue to practice this in our times together.
- My children are actually enjoying the meetings more and have been noticeably impacted by our times together as each Believer contributes something and ministers to each other in the group. This has been a big encouragement to me. I want the children actively involved and growing in God and their ability to minister by being an active part of the time.
- I'm also looking forward to our times together in greater anticipation as we see how the Holy Spirit wants to lead. I no longer consistently feel like I have to carry it. If God's not regularly doing things in the lives of

the group members or they don't want to share the part that He's giving them, then we'll most likely have a flatter group time. I no longer want to expend the energy to try to inordinately prop up a flat meeting!

This small, simple church model is one that I believe the Holy Spirit has been stressing for a long time and will remain important for 2022 and the years ahead. Don't get me wrong, I still enjoy large group meetings (made up of hundreds or even thousands of Believers) with dynamic worship and anointed teaching. But there are important biblical components that are missing in these types of meeting as well as these gatherings not being doable in large swaths of the globe. Also, where the church is growing most significantly throughout the world the Believers can't safely meet in these larger settings. These brothers and sisters typically have significant persecution, no church building, no "on-staff" leadership, and no ministry bank accounts. I strongly believe that small, simple gatherings of Believers are the "brick and mortar" of the church and an area that we as Believers would be wise to focus on both now and in the days ahead.

Tomorrow I'll share more about this and what I believe is important for us to focus on as we head into the new calendar year. I'm excited about the days ahead of us and hope you are too.