

The Components Of A Church Gathering

1 Timothy 4:13-14

July 31, 2022

Pastor Francis Bezzam

13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

Have you ever wondered what a church gathering should look like? When we gather together on a Sunday like today, what are the particulars of a church gathering?

Here is another way to think about Sunday worship. What is the purpose of our church gathering and what is to be included?

Francis Grimke, who served as a pastor and whose life and writings have encouraged me wrote about Sunday gathering this way.

“The church is the place of worship, of spiritual refreshment, where people may come and be instructed in the things of God, in things of an elevating and ennobling character – a place from which we may get glimpses of life on its highest plane – where we are forced to think of the enduring treasures – of the things that are true, just, pure, lovely and of good report. It is not a place for entertainment or amusement, where we go to while away the time, to get away from the serious things of life. Unfortunately, that is what some ministers seem to think it is for and so arrange their services with that end in view”. – Francis Grimke

Well, today we see Paul’s instructions to Timothy about the essentials about a church gathering.

We also see his instruction to not neglect the gift Timothy was given. And I believe each of you has a gift. And just as Paul reminded Timothy not to neglect his gift, you must use your God given gift for his glory. It is the right thing to do.

Now, we are in this series learning Paul’s instructions to the church. Paul’s purpose statement in this letter to Timothy is in 1 Timothy 3:15 *“I am writing these things to you so that, ¹⁵ if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God”*.

Last two weeks, we saw Paul’s instructions about godliness. First, the value and promise of godliness and last week the five marks of godliness – speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.

So, this morning, we’ll be looking at two important instructions from Paul.

One: The components of a church gathering.

Two: Not neglecting God's gift.

Verse 13:

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

Paul literally gives the job description for Timothy as a pastor. Last week we saw Paul telling Timothy to command and teach things that concern godliness. Here Paul says, "devote yourself". Meaning, attend to these things, make sure you focus and pay attention to the *three* things Paul lists in verse 13.

1. Public reading of Scripture. Why does Paul put such a high value on Scripture? And why do we read scripture in our services? Here are a few observations:
 - a. First and foremost Scripture is profitable. Scripture is advantageous and beneficial in many ways. "*All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable*" (2 Timothy 3:16). In Paul's day, everyone did not have access to the Bible the way we have it in our hands today. So one advantage of publicly reading Scripture is that those who did not have a copy of the Bible or those who did know how to read could hear the words of God. One author says that when we hear Scripture being read, it's as if God is speaking. God is the Author of Scripture. Who gets the right to be heard? Who gets the first and final word? God does. In the very first book of the Bible, we see the words, "*And God said, let there be light*" (Genesis 1:3). So you see God is a God who speaks through Scripture.
 - b. Second observation: Scripture reveals the nature about God. Scripture also reveals what our response ought to towards God. As believers, the public reading of Scripture simply reminds us who God is and much more. For example, Psalm thirty-three tells us "*Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm*" Psalm 33:8-9
 - c. Another advantage: Scripture helps us build faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the words of Christ (Romans 10:17). I remember a friend sharing with me that his father who was once not a believer came to faith in Christ just hearing the words of the Bible being read to him. He said that his father was once bed ridden with an illness and as his mother was cared for the father, the mother asked if she could read the Bible. And just by reading the Bible, the man came to faith in Christ. And with prayer, the man became recovered. You want to grow in faith? Give yourself to constant diet of reading, hearing and meditating on Scripture.

So, Paul's first instruction to Timothy – devote yourself to the public *reading* of Scripture. That is why we read Scripture at the beginning of our service. The second instruction is *exhortation*.

2. Exhortation.

- a. This word means to urge, to appeal, to spur, to comfort or to encourage. In one word, this is the task of *preaching*. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost where you see thousands gathered. This is how Peter *exhorted* them. “*And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”*” ⁴¹ *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls”*(Acts 2:40-41).
- b. In the days of the early church in the first century, many were becoming followers of Jesus. You could say those believers came from two major groups – Jews and non-Jews or gentiles. And as gentiles were becoming followers of Jesus, some Jewish people wanted to impose Jewish practices like circumcision on gentiles. So in Acts 15, you see a major meeting to debate these issues. And they wrote to the gentiles that they need not follow Jewish customs because they too have received the same grace that Jewish believers received. So when they received this letter, we are told “*they rejoiced because of its encouragement (exhortation)*” (Acts 15:31).
- c. Paul also uses this word a couple of times to tell believers to be united and have hope. I love how Paul says it in Romans 15. “*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). Our prayer is that you are encouraged when you hear a message every Sunday and are equipped in the faith to be more goldy in your speech and conduct. To grow in love, faith and purity.

Paul’s first instruction to Timothy – devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture. The second instruction is *exhortation*. And the third instruction is teaching.

3. Teaching.

- a. This is where Paul’s puts a great emphasis on for Timothy. Last week we saw Paul writing to Timothy to command and *teach* these things. Not surprisingly, the context of Paul’s letter is also for Timothy to confront false teachers. It is the teaching of the church that is central to the spiritual health of those in the church. And where there is false teaching, the spiritual health declines and godliness decreases. So Paul’s emphasis on sound or healthy teaching cannot be underestimated. We are a Scripture reading church, we are an exhorting or an encouraging church, we are a praying church and we are a teaching church. The early church devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles “*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

The very best example of teaching is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. He was not any ordinary teacher he was a master teacher. No one else could rival his teaching. In

Matthew 5, in what is known as the sermon on the Mount, verse one describes it this way, “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them*”. Making disciples of Jesus Christ involves teaching. In the last chapter of Matthew, before Jesus ascended into heaven, these were his last words – “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*”²⁰ *teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*”. This is for all disciples. Jesus commands all his disciples to be disciple makers. And the way you make other disciples is to *teach* all that he commanded us.

We saw Paul’s three instruction to Timothy – devote yourself to the public *reading* of Scripture. To *exhortation* and to *teaching*. Now these are not the only essentials of a church gathering. Singing. Praising, taking part in communion are essential to a worship service. Colossians 3:16 tells us to “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God*”.

Now, as Timothy keeps reading Paul’s letter, there must have been a point where Timothy felt overwhelmed with the task at hand. He is to confront the false teachers. He is to train himself for godliness. He is to live as an example for others. So he might be thinking, “this is a lot”. But Paul knows all this. Timothy is Paul’s spiritual son. So Paul balances his instruction with a wonderful reminder about Timothy’s calling into the ministry. Look at verse 14.

14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus tells about three people receiving talents. Two of them used their talents and multiplied what they had. One of them did nothing with it.

There was time in Timothy’s life when he was set apart for Gospel. Elders had evaluated him. They had watched his life. They approved his conduct. They publicly ordained him for the work of a minister of the Gospel. So, as Timothy wonders if he really has what it takes to take on this role as a pastor to promote godliness and to promote sound teaching, Paul tells him, “you have what it takes”. Use the gift you have. Don’t neglect it. Don’t leave that gift hidden. He didn’t earn the gift but received it from God.

Paul himself was a very gifted man. God used Paul in so many ways. And Paul says “*But each man has his own gift from God*” 1 Corinthians 7:7

Paul writes in Romans that we use our gifts according to the grace given to us.

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness” Romans 12:6-8

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” 1 Peter 4:10-11

So, to wrap it up, use your gifts for the glory of God. Use them to serve one another.

However, there is gift that God offers that you need to receive if you have *never* received it. This is the gift of salvation. All other gifts pale in comparison to his gift.

As a believer you have received a gift from God and cannot be revoked.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” Ephesians 2:8-9

If you have never received this gift the Bible says that *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*. Romans 6:23

This is the free gift of righteousness. Romans 5:17

And what must you do to receive this gift?

Repent and believe. And you will receive the forgiveness of your sins and gift of God.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: **The Components Of a Church Gathering.** 1 Timothy 4:13-14

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. Paul tells Timothy to devote himself to the reading of Scripture. What must we believe about the value of Scripture? 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

2. How have you profited from the reading of scripture, its preaching and teaching? Go around and share?
3. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

4. For personal reflection: Do you sense an area where God has gifted you in? How do you see using your gift to serve others? 1 Peter 4:10-11