

# 12

## "Our Own Assembling Together"

- Heb 10:25

Our church meets every Sunday, usually at Chuck and Lynda's house. Their door officially opens at 10:00 a.m. Few ever arrive on time! We mostly all manage to arrive between 10:05 and 10:25. During that time, the older kids play basketball and the younger ones run around in the yard. They do not come into the house until their track shoes are caked with Georgia clay (this is so they can smear it into the carpeting). Parents with little children make several trips between their cars and the house toting tots, toys for tots, high chairs, food for the Lord's Supper, and books. Once inside, people cluster in small knots talking and greeting each other.

Chuck's home is about 1,400 square feet in size. His driveway and the curb in front of the house are filled by our cars (except under the basketball net). Chuck is considering a new deck across the back of his house.

Around 10:30 someone (usually Rusty or Steve, the guys who play the guitar and banjo) says, "Let's sing a song!" As they sing, the others pile into the living room, sit down, and join in. Keith A. put together some praise/Scripture song notebooks which we use. We sing a lot of medleys (out of Keith's book).

There aren't enough chairs for everyone. Rather than buy more we just keep hoping someone will leave to start another house church. It hasn't happened yet. The Wilsons sit on the piano bench, flanked by their two sons (no one can play the piano, but it sure looks nice). Spencer, a single guy in his twenties, sits on the rock hearth along with two or three of his closest preschooler buddies. Chuck's two sofas are usually filled with giggling girls and a "shushing" mom or two (Arietta and Julie). Rusty and Steve sit in kitchen chairs near each other to coordinate the "pickin'-n-grinnin'." Sandra sits next to Steve and wrestles their one-year old all during the meeting. Their other two preschoolers are either with Chuck and Lynda's two teenagers or with Spencer. David and Molly sit in kitchen chairs behind a sofa. This helps them corral their young'un. Chris, a love-struck single, usually arrives around 11:00 (late night date, he explains) and slinks down into a sofa between two of Rusty's kids. Keith W. sits in a chair on the other side of Rusty. Chuck piddles in the kitchen or hovers in the doorway during the open meeting (yet he never misses a thing). Lynda, a nurse, just arrived from working all night and sits dazedly near the piano. Ruth sits about half the meeting and stands with her baby the other half. Bill, her husband, works nearly every Sunday (poor guy).

Anyway, after the medley, someone will request a song. If the musicians can play it, they do. If not we sing "acapulco!" Another will pick a song. Then another. Then Spencer will rise and say it's time for public Scripture reading. We just finished Genesis and began Luke (at one chapter a week). He usually divides the chapter into sections and farms it out to be read aloud by several people. After it's over, we often kick the content of the text around, making observations, applications, and sharing insights as a group.

Not infrequently someone will copy a new song for us to learn and pass it out. Occasionally we sing

from the hymnals we bought. If a visitor comes who can play the piano, we usually wear him out singing hymns!

Somewhere along the line several will relate a testimony or experience they had during the week (all things said in the meeting must be to edify the whole church). Almost every week one of the brothers will bring a teaching (anywhere between 5 and 25 minutes long). Nothing is scheduled ahead of time. Sometimes two or three will bring teachings (depending on how long-winded the others were!). The teachings are rarely monologues, but rather dialogues. Occasionally no one will teach.

There is no one who leads the meeting. After a while it gets quiet because everyone has run out of things to say. Finally, someone will start praying, and a conversational prayer time will follow (but sometimes not). Always someone will thank God for the food of the Lord's Supper and ask Jesus to return. Occasionally a request is made that we conclude the open meeting with a song.

The Lord's Supper thus begins anywhere between 12:00 and 1:00 p.m. We take it as a full meal along with the bread and the cup. The fare is strictly pot-providence! Everyone brings something. The bread and cup are on the table with the other food; people partake of them as they serve their plates (buffet style). There isn't room to sit down at a table to eat. We spread a sheet on the floor for the kids to mess on. The adults mostly stand up and eat. Paper plates and plastic forks and cups are the order of the day.

There is no ending time. People stay and fellowship as long as they like. Some leave around 1:30 or 2:00. Others "hang out" at Chuck's until 4:00 or 5:00. Chuck and Lynda feel no need to "entertain" them. Lynda might go to bed and Chuck play on his computer, all the while a clump of guys resolve some pressing theological issue or just watch football.

There are 17 adults (6 couples and 5 singles) and 14 kids in our house church. The kids are well behaved usually and stay with us in the open meetings, though sometimes they get bored and go outside. A good time of fellowship, learning, encouragement, and mutual participation is usually had by all.

"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"-1 Co 14:26.

- S.A.

## Tertullian's\* *Apology*

. . . We are a society with a common religious feeling, unity of discipline, a common bond of hope. We meet in gatherings and congregations to approach God in prayer, massing our forces to surround Him . . . We meet to read the divine Scriptures . . . Our presidents are elders of proved character . . .

Even if there is a treasury of a sort, it is not made up of money paid in initiation fees, as if religion were a matter of contract. Every man once a month brings some modest contribution-or whenever he wishes, and only if he does wish, and if he can; for nobody is compelled; it is a voluntary offering . . . to feed the poor and to bury them, for boys and girls who lack property and parents, and then for slaves grown old . . .

So we, who are united in mind and soul, have no hesitation about sharing property. All is common among us-except our wives. At that point we dissolve our partnership . . .

Our dinner shows its idea in its name; it is called by the Greek name for love . . . We do not take our places at table until we have first partaken of prayer to God. Only so much is eaten as satisfies hunger . . . After water for the hands come the lights; and then each, from what he knows of the Holy Scriptures, or from his own heart, is called before the rest to sing to God . . . Prayer in like manner ends the banquet . . . (*Roman Civilization Source book II: the Empire*, 588).

\*Tertullian was a Latin speaking believer who lived around 200 A.D.

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