

How should the Church Operate?

By: Steven H. Atherton

Recently, I have had the experience of establishing a church in Claremont, NH. In the process, the Lord has really been dealing with me about my preconceived ideas of what a church is and how it should operate. In brief then, I thought it might be helpful to share a few of the lessons the Lord has been teaching me.

First, the church is the Body of Christ. As such, the question I always ask folks is - What part of your body does not minister? Is your little toe not to be listened to? How about when you are stepping on a tack!? The fact of the matter is that every part of your body ministers to the other parts and all parts have to be willing to submit themselves to the others as they perform their functions in the church.

Second, since we are obviously all ministers why then do most people go to church expecting to be ministered unto? I tell the people who attend our church, if you come to church to be ministered unto then you are coming for the wrong reason. In I Corinthians, Paul talks about how when you come together - one hath a psalm, another a revelation, another an interpretation. Faith is built through exercise, not only of your own, but also by receiving from others. The common way in which churches operate today - where everyone comes to hear the great minister of God - destroys rather than builds up the faith of its members. It is the minister and not the Lord that is lifted up and the people come away believing that God IS a respecter of persons when the bible plainly teaches that He is NOT! The result is that the people justify themselves in not contending for the faith and the minister is lifted up in PRIDE. By contrast, when unbelievers or those that are weak in the faith enter a church that is truly a body of Christ, where every member ministers unto the other, people SEE God's word in ACTION and faith is nurtured and built up. This accords with the Lord's plan that we ALL fight the good fight of and be perfected in THE FAITH.

Finally, as I have been looking at naming our church, the Lord has been dealing with me about His Church. The Lord dwells in His people, not buildings or denominations. As such, I believe the Lord has shown me to call our church a "Christian Meetinghouse" because that is what the building represents - a place where His people can gather together in His name for worship, praise and edification and to share his gospel with those that are without. Our building is open to people and ministers of all denominations for the Lord has His people scattered throughout the churches and it is our desire to work with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

I hope the Lord blesses you by this message. If you have any questions or comments, please share them with me.

Yours in Christ,
Steve Atherton