

INTRODUCING **GATHERINGS**



accelerate 
MULTIPLYING GOSPEL MOVEMENTS

INTRODUCING GATHERINGS

“Church is about people - people together on a journey.”

Jesus loves his Church! The Church is described in the Bible as the body of Christ, the flock of God, God’s household, a spiritual house built with living stones and a holy priesthood. The most beautiful analogy is the bride of Jesus. There is no greater **love story in the universe** than that of Jesus and his bride!

So often when we refer to church, we think of buildings, institutions, pulpits, sermons or “church services.” Our modern concept of a “local church” is more cultural than Biblical. Church is about **people - people together on a journey!**

So how should we define “church”? Church is formed when **a group of baptised believers gather regularly** for **worship, community, nurture** and depart those gatherings on **mission** (to obey all Jesus’ commands).

Note the word **gather**. Churches, or “faith communities,” can also be referred to as “gatherings.” We use the word **Gathering** to give **fresh expression** to the word “church”. Gatherings look **very different** from traditional church services. They are **community spaces** where families, children and individuals interact, grow spiritually and make a Kingdom impact in their neighbourhood and city.

Healthy gatherings are larger than a small group and yet small enough to be relational. They provide spaces in which to **grow** spiritually, to **learn** together and **encourage** one another to **greater levels of obedience** to our Lord. Gatherings **care** for the sick, the needy and those who are struggling.

Gatherings are best **led by a team**, not by an individual. The team shares the various responsibilities and functions. Everyone is encouraged to **participate** and to **grow** on the journey. The Bible is clear: the journey of a disciple is never an individual journey, it is always in the presence of others on the same journey. We can only complete the journey together.

Jesus had a **movement**, not a religion in mind. The gospel spreads best through such movements of **ordinary people**. When we gather, Jesus wants to build his Church through **every person present**. When every person participates, we see the body of Christ in action and Jesus receives the glory.

Scripture Discovery on GATHERING

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." - **Acts 2:42-47**

WHAT DOES IT SAY? (My notes on what does it mean for us today...)

WHAT WILL I DO? (...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)

(Additional discoveries: 1 Corinthians 3:9; 12:12-27; 14:26;
Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:16; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 2:4-5; 5:2; Revelation 19:7-9)

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INTRODUCING WORSHIP IN GATHERINGS

"There are many creative and fun ways to worship God together!"

Worship is "to show worth" to God in everything we do - it's a lifestyle. We were created to **glorify God**. Christians have so much to be **thankful** for! God sent his only Son to die for our sins and reconnect us to Himself.

When God's people gather together, worship should be **central** to all we do. The Church's **primary task** is the practice of communal worship. Although evangelism, ministry to the world and mission are important, **these flow from our worship**. We, the body of Christ, are filled, empowered and sent by the Spirit out of our **communal worship**. Without worship, mission and ministry soon lose their meaning and power. In the context of worship, they become the extension of God's love to the world.

There are **many creative and fun ways to worship God together**. Worship is so much more than Sunday singing! How about testimonies (stories), worship in drama, worship in art, e.g. painting, poetry, music, sculpting, dancing; also giving (in secret) and taking communion together? In the week our **work** continues our worship, because **we should do everything as worship to the Lord**. Yes, even cleaning up after a messy household can be worship! (Colossians 3:23)

Have you ever been challenged to worship God in a new way? Scripture says we should sing a **new** song to the Lord! (Psalm 96) We have **God-given freedom to worship God** together in many creative ways, so don't let tradition stop the expression of your worship. Explore new expressions of worship together.

At a Gathering **worship can start with a simple question** such as: **what are you thankful for?** What made you smile this week? How did God show up this week? The answers honour God and encourage fellow believers to join in.

The New Testament encourages us to **sacrifice out of gratitude** for what Jesus did. We offer **our bodies** as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1); **praise from our lips** (Hebrews 13:15); **doing good and sharing with those in need** (Hebrews 13:16); **finances** (Philippians 4:16-19) and prayer for others (**intercession**) (Revelation 8:3).

There are so many ways to worship God! **God looks at the heart**, not at the method. Gatherings are safe spaces where we can **grow** in our worship.

Scripture Discovery on WORSHIP

"Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation." - Psalm 100

WHAT DOES IT SAY? (My notes on what does it mean for us today...)

WHAT WILL I DO? (...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)

(Additional discoveries: Psalm 19, 63 & 150; Matthew 6:1-4; John 4:21-24;
1 Corinthians 6:20; Colossians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:4-5; Revelation 4:11)



INTRODUCING COMMUNITY IN GATHERINGS

“Healthy loving communities are irresistible.”

Man was **created to belong**. We crave **meaningful relationships** and **authentic community**.
The bottom-line is we need each another.

Jesus said, “Now I am giving you a **new command**—love one another. **Just as** I have loved you, **so you must** love one another. This is how all men will know that you are my disciples, because you have **such love for one another.**” (John 13:34-35)

Satan, as the enemy of God, is the destroyer of community. He is continually at work **tearing apart** families and communities by stirring up our latent pride and selfishness.

“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”
- James 3:14-16

God’s type of love has been put in believers’ hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).
It’s a secure love that loves because of what it is, not because of what it can get.
Obedient, Christ-led believers are needed to **build healthy Gatherings**.

Gatherings help fulfill our **need for love and belonging**. They are designed to intentionally **build a loving Christian community**. We believe church is a **family**, not a business or spectator sport. It’s about caring and sharing, food and fun, tears and laughter. Things that **build** us together and **hold** us together.

The community part of a Gathering starts with questions like: **How can we help one another?**
What are you struggling with? How can we meet those needs? Honest, gentle, probing questions that teach and lead to caring for one another.

Other **creative and loving ways** to build community in a Gathering include eating together, ice breakers or games, weekends away together, doing sport or hobbies together, social media groups, etc.

God’s love is the only **perfect bond** that sustains authentic community. Disciple makers know how to **build** healthy Gatherings that **display** God’s love to the world.

Scripture Discovery on COMMUNITY

"Is there any such thing as Christians cheering each other up? Do you love me enough to want to help me? Does it mean anything to you that we are brothers in the Lord, sharing the same Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all? Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and in what they are doing. Your attitude should be the kind that was shown us by Jesus Christ." - Paul in Philippians 2:1-5

WHAT DOES IT SAY? (My notes on what does it mean for us today...)

WHAT WILL I DO? (...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)

(Additional discoveries: John 15:8-14; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 5:5;
Colossians 3:1-17, 13-15; 1 John 3:16-17)



INTRODUCING NURTURE IN GATHERINGS

"Leave no man, woman or child behind – caring deeply for one another."

Whereas the community aspect of a Gathering focuses on "what builds us **together**," **nurture** focuses on the spiritual growth of each **individual**. All people have spiritual, physical and emotional needs. A Gathering is the place where those needs can be met. Prayer, prophecy, scripture discovery and discussion are facilitated by the team. They create an environment where members of the Gathering can minister to one another.

Small and mid-sized communities are **intimate enough** that no one "slips through the cracks". **Everyone** is nurtured (cared for) and equipped to do the same. No one travels their discipleship journey alone. Everyone is equipped for ministry to others.

In the Gathering you won't find an individual religious specialist who does all the talking and ministry. Gatherings are led **by a team** and facilitated in such a way to ensure **everyone's** participation. A more experienced **shepherding team** is sometimes equipped to help with more specialized needs such as some counselling or conflict situations.

When we meet, we give time for nurture to take place. We often **pair up** and ask one another: "**What is causing stress in your life right now?** What is your greatest need? ...and I really want to know!" We pray for one another and minister to one another's **physical** and **emotional** needs.

Our primary **spiritual** nurture activity is **discovering truth together** from Scripture. As we break into smaller groups we discuss a topic and relevant scripture/s. Questions we ask when we approach the **Word of God** include: "What does the scripture say? What does it mean? What is God saying to you? What will you do in response? Who will you tell?"

The team will always consciously **build away** from themselves **to** the Bible and the Holy Spirit. **We want the Holy Spirit to speak truth to each person's heart.** He is the best Teacher!

Authentic communities of believers **care deeply** for another. They understand that "people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care!"

Scripture Discovery on NURTURE

"A third time he asked him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, 'Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Then feed my sheep.'" - John 21:15-17

WHAT DOES IT SAY? (My notes on what does it mean for us today...)

WHAT WILL I DO? (...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)

(Additional discoveries: Ezekiel 34:1-24; John 6:63, 68; 13:34-35; Romans 10:17;
2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-5; James 2:14-18; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

INTRODUCING MISSION IN GATHERINGS

"Sharing the love and truth of Jesus with our friends, family and community."

Let's review what a Gathering is: "A Gathering (church) is formed when a group of believers assemble regularly for **worship, community and nurture**, and depart on **mission**." Mission means leaving the Gathering with the intention of **obeying** all **Jesus' commands** in order to **transform** our families, friends and community.

Jesus **commanded** us to **go** and **make disciples** everywhere, **baptize** them and **teach them to obey** all his commands. Healthy gatherings help believers **grow in obedience** to Jesus' commands. They also share the Gospel in **word, deed and power** as people from the Gathering go about their daily lives.

Questions that lead to mission include:

- > **Who can we tell** what God is doing in our lives?
- > How can the Gathering **bring healing** to our community?
- > What are the **pain points** of our community?
- > Who in the community are **open** and **welcoming** to us?

We **encourage** one another with our mission stories (testimonies) and **plan** how to share the love of Jesus by meeting not only **spiritual**, but also **physical** and **emotional** needs of those who are **far from God**. Healthy gatherings send out **teams** that start **discovery groups** in identified natural social networks (affinities).

Mission is not something we start, it is something God started and **we join**. It is finding out through **prayer** what God is doing and then **joining** him in His work, letting our good deeds **shine out** for all to see, so that everyone will praise our heavenly Father. Mission is **participating** in God's love for people; visiting people in need, caring for widows and orphans, praying for others and making followers of Jesus are all examples of a **Gathering together on mission**. People matter to them!

The Gospel is the only **answer** for our broken world. Obedient followers of Christ bring **healing** and **salvation** to their families, friends, colleagues and community. We truly believe all our problems can be **solved** by making disciples properly.

If we do God's **work** God's **way**, we will get God's **results**!

Scripture Discovery on MISSION

"So Jesus used this illustration: 'If you had a hundred sheep and one of them strayed away and was lost in the wilderness, wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine others to go and search for the lost one until you found it? And then you would joyfully carry it home on your shoulders. When you arrived you would call together your friends and neighbors to rejoice with you because your lost sheep was found. Well, in the same way heaven will be happier over one lost sinner who returns to God than over ninety-nine others who haven't strayed away! Or take another illustration: A woman has ten valuable silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and look in every corner of the house and sweep every nook and cranny until she finds it? And then won't she call in her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her? In the same way there is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner repents.'" - Luke 15:3-10

WHAT DOES IT SAY? (My notes on what does it mean for us today...)

WHAT WILL I DO? (...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)

WHAT WILL WE DO? (...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)

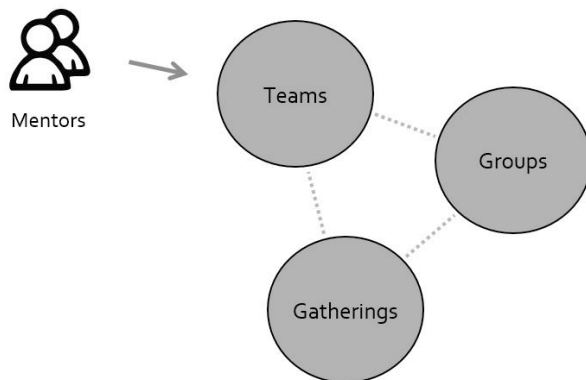
(Additional discoveries: Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-46; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 10:1-9; 25-37; 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Romans 10:9-15; Acts 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9)

INTRODUCING MISSION IN GATHERINGS

"In Movement Everything Multiplies!"

Disciple Making Movements (DMM) are fuelled by **rapidly reproducing disciple makers** who multiply the gospel into their **natural social networks**. The momentum that this creates can sweep through nations with the ability to create thousands of new Gatherings in a relatively short period of time.

Why do we need to consider movements? Worldwide, the number of Christians is still increasing every day, but the percentage of Christians is **stuck** at around 33% of the world's population. The Gospel is not spreading as it should. With the population explosion, the problem is only getting worse. By 2045 the global population is projected to reach nine billion!



Globally, the Church has 15 million conversions a year, but we have 12 million defections. Jesus is still the master builder of his Church, the **message** is still the same, but the **messengers** and **method** need a radical overhaul. We need to move faster and we need to be more effective. We must **accelerate!**

Our response to this challenge is to **launch**, **mentor** and **multiply** movements of ordinary people who make disciples (who in turn make more disciples!). We work to multiply **servant leaders**, **disciple makers** and **new church gatherings**. Our **mission** is to love God, obey him, love others and help others to do the same.

Ask yourself: **"How did Jesus start?"** He chose a team of 12 followers and mentored them. In Luke 10, he then sent this team to find people of peace (POP's - welcoming open people). The POP's were the doors to groups (natural social networks) that were invited to discover God. As the individuals and groups came to faith, they were baptized and formed into sustainable communities of believers – new gatherings. Without starting new healthy gatherings, movements are short-lived and collapse very quickly. These gatherings then sent out teams again to search for persons of peace... and so the **movement cycle** continued!

Gospel movements are simple, but not easy! Many counter intuitive principles need to be understood and implemented. It remains a work of God. **Will you join Him?**

Scripture Discovery on DISCIPLE MAKING MOVEMENTS

"You've heard my message... now entrust it to faithful individuals who will be competent to teach others." - Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2

WHAT DOES IT SAY? *(My notes on what does it mean for us today...)*

WHAT WILL I DO? *(...if God is speaking to me, how I will obey Him?)*

WHAT WILL WE DO? *(...if God is speaking to us, how we will obey Him together?)*

(Additional discoveries: Habakkuk 2:14; Matthew 16:18; Luke 5:27-32; 6:12-16; 10:25-37;
10:1-9; Acts 13:2-4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)