

TREXO: THE ON RAMP

Session 6 - Gathered People

GOAL: Join together with God's people in a church.

VERSE: Matthew 6:9-13

*"Pray, then, in this way:
'Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
'Give us this day our daily bread.
'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"*

OPENING PRAYER:

(Breathe) Heavenly Father, what a wonder it is to come into Your presence today. You are the God of all creation. In the beginning, there was nothing. You spoke and creation came into existence. You did that. And, now, I can come to YOU. You are my Father and I am Your child. Let me hear what You have to say today. In Jesus' name, amen.¹

RECEIVE:

Jesus' prayer is an individual prayer AND a community prayer. By using "our," "us," and "we" Jesus shows His expectation that His people will be together in unity. Jesus has not called anyone to live life with Him alone. And Jesus has not called anyone to live loosely connected to His people. Jesus has called us to be intimately connected with other brothers and sisters faithfully living out His will. These gatherings of His people are called churches.

Church is never described as a building or a place. Church is always "God's gathered people." Scripture gives us seven different pictures of what church is to be.

1. Family - Mark 10:28-30 *Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.*

As a family we care for each other, provide for each other financially when needed, and love each other. We become fathers and mothers; brothers and sisters; sons and daughters.

2. Revelation - John 17:20-21 (This is a part of one of Jesus' prayers.) *"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be*

¹ Release your clutter to the Lord.

one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, **so that the world may believe that You sent Me** [emphasis added].”

As a place of revelation our love for each demonstrates the presence and power of God to the world. As God’s people we live different lives together in a community that cannot be replicated.

3. Mission Base - Philippians 2:1-2 *Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*

As a mission base we are sent, by God, to the lost and hurting of the world to make disciples who make disciples. We do this together.

4. Temple – 1 Peter 2:4-5 *And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

As a temple we worship the Lord, administer the ordinances He commands, and collect offerings. We praise the Lord through songs of the faith and new songs He will write through us. We administer two ordinances: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Finally, we collect offerings God teaches us to give Him.

5. Hospital – Matthew 9:9-13 *As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him. Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?” But when Jesus heard this, He said, “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

As a hospital we minister to the sick, needy, and wounded. Those who are broken in the world find restoration in Jesus through the gathering of His people. We offer salvation, inner healing, and deliverance.

6. Body – 1 Corinthians 12:12-18 *For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.*

As a body every member of His gathered people has a specific role to play. Led of the Spirit we participate in the body according to the unique gifts and abilities we have been given.

7. School – Luke 6:39-40 *And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.*

As a school we learn and teach the ways of God and the word of God. We are trained and equipped to be children of God and to be faithful to His leading. We receive training through teaching, discipleship, gatherings, conferences, Bible studies, and other methods.

How do these pictures affect your understanding of God’s gathered people?

Which picture(s) are new to you?

Which picture(s) are challenging to you? Why?

A church can be six people meeting in a house or 6,000 meeting in a building. The Holy Spirit will create and build each church according to our Father’s will. Size is irrelevant. Meeting place is irrelevant. What is relevant is that those meeting together are children of God following what the Spirit is leading them to do.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

God has established two offices for the church – Pastor/Elder and Deacon. While there is no formula for church leadership in the Scripture, the majority of evidence points to New Testament churches being led by more than one Elder. (The term Elder is synonymous with Pastor and Overseer.) Peter admonishes Elders in 1 Peter 5:1-4,

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Based on this passage, what are the responsibilities of the Elders?

Deacons are those who have been set apart by the church to serve the church in a way that allows the Elders to focus on praying and teaching the body. A church may only have one or two Elders and no deacons. Deacons may come later as the needs of the body require. Qualifications of Elders and Deacons are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

The responsibility of those in the church is to faithfully follow the leaders God has put in charge of the church. Hebrews 13:6 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” As leaders humble themselves under God’s leadership, He will give them direction for the church. The members of the church receive that direction and follow.

CHURCH PROTECTION

Hebrews 13:6 also says that the Elders of the church watch over the “souls” of the members. Elders will give an account to God for the way they shepherded the people in their church. Therefore, when we join a gathering of God’s people, we come under the protection of the church. We are no longer on our own. As the Elders are under the authority of God, the church, when they follow God’s leading through His Elders, enjoys His protection.

HEALING AND FREEDOM

Sometimes we have had negative experiences in church, with church leaders, or with church members. In order for us to become a healthy part of a new gathering of people, we must deal with lingering anger or unforgiveness towards these churches and/or people. Write any churches, leaders, or members you need to forgive. Follow the pattern laid out in the previous session. Continue asking the Spirit to show you the people and circumstances He has for you to deal with. Use the space below to write.

Sometimes we can be held back from fully engaging in what the Spirit is doing in us because we are holding on to a form of church we are familiar with. If you grew up in church, then you may need to let go of your vision of what church is supposed to be so that you can engage in the new work He is doing. Write down any church ways you are holding on to that the Spirit is showing you are holding you back.

Now surrender these to the Lord. Mark a line through them representing the end of these in you.

Becoming a part of a church is critical for the life of a follower of Jesus. It is in the church where a person will find the love, training, healing, and direction they need. It is in the church where each person's unique talents and abilities will be discovered and cultivated.

No church is perfect or complete. No one person in the church is perfect. No church is going to be perfectly faithful. Do not look for the perfect church. Look for the church God is leading you to join and be faithful in it.

This is the end of Session 6. You are learning God's intent for His people to gather together. Write down any emotions, thoughts, or spirits you need to RESIST so that you can RESPOND to God's direction:

CLOSING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, thank You for the body of Christ. Lead me to the family of God that You have for me to connect with. Lead me to those who can equip me to walk in Your will. Lead me to those who will become my family in the Lord. Heal me of the wrong perceptions and understandings I have had about your people. Show me where I can serve Your people and be a blessing as others have been a blessing to me. In Jesus' name, amen!