

# Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: January 6, 2013

## An A.S.I.D.E. About Church

by Dan Trygg

"But truthing in agapē, we might grow all things into Him, who is the head (the source, origin, the one who brings to completion), Christ, ...out from whom all *the Body*, ...being tightly fitted together and being knitted together by means of every connection of support (or, supply, provision) according to the in-working within the abilities of each individual part..., *makes the growth of the Body toward the building up of itself in agapē.*" Eph. 4:15,16

We should think of our gatherings with one another as being similar to a huddle in a football game, or as a dugout in a baseball game. When we come together, we are to meet to help one another get refreshed and refocused, ...so we can get back "out there" to "play ball" in the various playing fields of our lives. Or, they are like team meetings, training classes, or interest groups of virtually any kind imaginable. The point is that **our meetings are times spent aside from the regular business of everyday life.** They are times where we meet with others to share struggles, to talk over mistakes, to pray together, to learn new methods and solutions to problems, to strategize and collaborate together *to enable us to be more effective* at whatever it is we do in our service for Christ. Church and small group gatherings are to encourage us to go back to our everyday business with new vigor and motivation. Analogies and word pictures are only illustrations. They are imperfect comparisons that help us to see aspects of life more clearly. Sometimes it takes a few analogies or comparisons to help us get a handle on a truth, a principle, or a "piece of reality" that we had not fully grasped before. The piece of reality for your consideration here has to do with **"What is church for, anyway? How does it work? What am I supposed to be getting out of it?"** Allow me to make some observations to stimulate the thinking process a bit, and then follow up with some principles that I believe would help us to clarify our thoughts and expectations about what "church" could be for us.

**First, church is not to be our life, ...it is to help us to live life more effectively.** To put it in terms of some of our illustrations: The *huddle* is not the game; the *game* is the game. The huddle is only there to help us play the game more effectively. In the same way, the *training seminar*, or the strategy session, is *not* the *job* for which I was hired (unless I am the one hired to give seminars). What I do at my desk is what I was hired for. Training or strategy meetings are only there to enable me to do my job more effectively. In the same way, *church is not our life*; it is an "aside", a retreat, a huddle, a strategy or training session. Church gatherings are only there to enable me, and the others in the Body, to live as servants of God more effectively. **Church is not "where it's at". It is not an end in itself; ...it is a means to an end.** It is an artificial environment which is intended to, as the apostle Paul says, "equip [us] to do a work of service" (Eph. 4:12). The church is to be *a time set apart* from the other busy activities of life. It is a time where we can gather with others to *prepare one another to do life more effectively.* **For what end? What is the purpose we are gathered together for? "To build up the Body of Christ"** [A much *larger* vision than a local gathering, but it must begin with those of us who come together!], **...until we all might grow up to maturity**, ...maturity in understanding, discernment, experiential relationship with God and Christlikeness of character, **...in order that**, instead of being tricked by the wiles of the enemy, we might grow all things into Jesus, out from whom *the Body*, being joined and knitted together through "truthing in love" and the unique functioning of each individual, **might cause the growth of the Body toward the building up of itself** in love (Eph. 4:13-16). **The endpoint is maturity for everybody**, represented by discernment, intimacy with God, and a character of righteousness and love. In other words, **church is to be a place where we get equipped to live life well.**

**Second, church will not tell me everything I need to know.** As with the corporate world, there are general principles and policies that may be applicable to everyone, but no one has exactly the same responsibilities, doing the same work in the same way, as I do. Like most businesses, and most teams in any setting, *the church is to be an interactive, interdependent community of specialists.* To some extent, because I face a unique set of tasks, and I am a unique person, I will need to find my own way to get the job done well. **No one does exactly what I do with the exact same set of variables, tools and abilities. I will need the freedom to find what works for me.** Like the sports analogy, I must go through a process of self-discovery, moving from learning certain fundamentals, ...to gaining insights through watching others and getting instruction and feedback from coaches and teammates, ...to finding a position that corresponds to my gifts and abilities, ...and then learning how I can best play my position by experimentation, by analysis and feedback, and through a growing accumulation of experiences. **In order for me to be at my best, I need a community of support that will accommodate me**, ...one that will accept *me* for who I

am (and who I am becoming), ...one that will encourage me to grow and experiment, ...one willing to change and make modifications together with me. **I also need to be willing to encourage and accommodate others.**

**Third, I need to take ownership for my own growth, as well as for my part in helping others to grow.** According to the NT, growth will not just "happen to us", *we must pursue it*. We must invest ourselves to "make it happen". A huge element of my own growth, as well as of my own personal fulfillment, is that **I have been made to help others. The process of maturing is growing** from being totally dependent upon others, through an adolescence of self-discovery and individuation, **to a place where I have the strength and perspective to offer help and support to others. We will never grow up if we remain passive.** We will never really learn to play the game, if we stay on the sidelines. Furthermore, *others* need what *we* have to offer. They will never benefit from what God has designed and intended for *us* to supply to *them*, unless we become *strong* and *able* to supply it, ...and unless we learn to interact with them in a way that is safe, appropriate, and helpful *to them*. Some of us spend a lot of time working on the first part, but have not developed the latter part. What is the strength for, if we cannot relate to others to *offer help* when they need it, ...and they will feel safe and comfortable enough to *take it* from us? Others work on the latter part, but not the former. What good is it to have relationships with others, if we have no sound, dependable insights or strength to offer them when they need us? *Both parts* of the equation are *necessary*, ...and they are *our responsibility*, like it or not. **It is quite clear that the New Testament plan for the church and the individual believer is that everyone is to participate, ...everyone has something significant to bring to the table to share with others.**

I mentioned that our meeting together is an artificial environment, a "time-out" from our everyday existence, ...an aside, like the dugout or the huddle or the business strategy meeting, to recharge, refocus, retool and to risk. Using the word, "aside", following is an acrostic to help us zero in on what our gathering together is to accomplish:

**Affirmation of value** -- Many of us have been deeply hurt by abusive family backgrounds, or we suffer from feelings of insecurity. The enemy is well known for his relentless accusation and slander against us. It is part of his technique to debilitate and isolate humankind, and to keep them under fear and domination. He magnifies our failings, and "beats us up" with criticisms and self-recriminations. Since this is true, and since we are to be a community of love, **the importance of spoken and outwardly expressed affirmation from one another cannot be underestimated.** God has outwardly expressed His valuation of us on the cross. We should follow His lead, and express affirmation to one another on a regular basis. The Biblical "holy kiss" was one way to do that. Giving hugs, ...where that is comfortable to *both* parties..., and sincerely greeting one another are initial ways of expressing this. Taking time to listen, and speaking relevant words of value and appreciation for the person will bring this deeper. We need the emotional support and upbuilding that comes from a community of people who truly care for us.

**Support in difficulty** -- The Bible talks of "weeping with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15), and that we truly are "members of one another" (Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor 12:18-27). **If one member is hurting, we all will be affected by their pain and struggle. Love calls us to "be there" for one another, when we go through hard times.** When we gather together, and someone shares their burden or pain, part of our purpose in meeting is to rally around that person to serve them, and to help them with their load (Gal. 6:2).

**Instruction** -- The four-fold ministry gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11,12 are all "word gifts", in that they all share the common feature of declaring God's word to people. This activity will help all of us to be "equipped", or "fitted-out" or "mended-and-restored", as we have need. **Since a large part of the maturation process is about renewing the mind, proclamation and teaching play a big role in helping us lay a foundation in that area.** Beyond these specific giftings, however, there is also the instruction that can happen if we will share life-lessons with each other, or practical applications of truth we have learned by experience in our own walk. The word "admonish" simply means to "bring to mind". **A "reminding ministry" is something that most of us can do**, not just a few "preacher types". "Truthing in love" implies an instructional element, as well. This *is* Body-life activity.

**Discipleship** -- Jesus commanded us to make disciples: active, obedient followers. **A discipline is a voluntary strategy for growth. Discipleship is putting ourselves into relationship with others for the purpose of growth and accountability.** God's plan for the church, Body-life, is a system of such relationships. He intends for us to take advantage of the support, insights, and common accountability which can be ours when we meet together.

**Encouragement to risk** -- Since so much of our progress in growth is dependent upon discovering by experimentation (Rom. 12:2), and pushing back the boundaries of the unknown and uncomfortable, **risk-taking is part and parcel of what it takes to grow.** Encouragement should be a key element of our interaction, when we meet. We *need* encouragement (giving-courage-within-to-face-the-fear) to do what does *not* come naturally or easily.