



Light from the Word

Presenting the Gospel – Supporting Small Churches

“The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house” (1 Cor. 16:19).

Small churches play a key role in presenting the Gospel to a lost and dying world. The scriptures call all of us go to “... *the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15).

There are several Bible verses that refer to churches starting in the homes of believers (Rom. 16:5, Col. 4:15, Phlm. 1:2) just as many of our Apostolic Christian congregations have had their beginning. These early gatherings were likely intimate settings where the Word of God was being lived and taught in an intentional way. Many of Paul’s letters show the close relationship he had with these “house” churches. We know *“The Lord is ... longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet 3:9). This is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit and the Lord’s goodness (Rom. 2:4). In the early churches, the gospel was readily spread. *“Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied”* (Acts 9:31). Multiplication happened as the churches were edified, walking in the fear of the Lord, and resting in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. *“And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily”* (Acts 16:5). Small churches wherein the Gospel truth, grace and love of Christ are proclaimed and lived, provide unique opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work and transform lives, and to positively impact the community.

Benedict Weyeneth was sent by Samuel Froehlich from Europe to America in response to a call for the true gospel message. As a result of this effort, the

seeds of the gospel were scattered. Ministers of the gospel were chosen to share the Word. Elders were ordained to help carry on the work. The churches flourished and the Word continued to spread. In the first 21 years after Weyeneth came to America, 24 congregations were established in eight different states. As these congregations grew, they spawned new churches in surrounding communities. These gatherings started small and grew into the churches we know today.

To better understand today’s needs and concerns, imagine yourself in the place of someone sent into the harvest at a small church. As you experience this new role, you find that you love reaching out to people and helping them see their need for a Savior. On Sunday as you worship, you are pressed into duty as a song leader even though you have never led before. Each Sunday a ministering brother comes from a different congregation to preach the Word. The co-worker you invited to church asks you why you don’t have a local minister. As you explain and try to help him connect with the visiting minister, your wife informs you that water is leaking under the sink and you realize as the only trustee you will need to find a plumber. Then, as the church treasurer, you need to ensure the plumber gets paid. At the end of the day you lay in bed exhausted and wonder about your “calling” and what it really means to support a small church.

While this example may seem exaggerated, it is being lived today in some of our small churches. Those called to support a small church can testify that God provides the grace to meet the needs where they themselves may feel lacking in skills and abilities. And the blessings do outweigh the labors (Gal. 6:9)!

What can you do to help? First, start with fervent intercessory prayer (James 5:16). Prayer helps us

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understand the needs of others through the Holy Spirit's work. Prayer allows searching of our own hearts for an understanding of our motives and willingness to serve. *"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me"* (Isa. 6:8). We often focus on why we can't do something or assume we are not "gifted." However, Isaiah simply said *"Here am I; send me."* As you meditate on this verse, what thoughts does the Holy Spirit press upon your heart? When you pray to God to send you, where do you sense His leading? Is He calling you to the local fields of harvest or to the fields in a small church? Fear can prevent us from fully surrendering our desires, will,

and life to the Lord. After you have prayed and surrendered your heart, be willing if called to help support and serve small churches.

Additionally, encouraging others is a powerful tool for the Lord's work. *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works"* (Heb. 10:24). Encouragement occurs most naturally through relationships. Work to build relationships with those in a small church. Visit small churches as often as possible. Repeat visits are especially helpful when trying to build relationships.

In summary, be prayerful about what God is calling you to do and counsel with your elder. Be willing to relocate if God leads in that direction. If you are a minister, pray for direction as to how God desires to use you to meet the need. There are many ways to support a small church. Small churches often have financial needs and may

struggle to maintain the church property. *"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest"* (Luke 10:1-2).

As you reflect on what it means to present the gospel through a small church, be encouraged to do your part to strengthen the body. Healthy small churches will facilitate growth into new areas and communities in America and beyond. *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* (Acts 1:8).

*"And let us consider one another to provoke
unto love and to good works"*

Hebrews 10:24