

## ***Where Are You Growing? 5-14-00***

I realize 99% of churches this day are on the subject of mothers. We'll break with tradition today, not because it isn't an important topic. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Mothers are one, if not the main influence on our lives. Most of us would have a hard time expressing our gratitude for the unselfish, Christlike love our mother's have shown us. But this morning the Lord has laid something else on my heart. I think you know that I struggle in prayer each week to seek exactly what the Lord would have for us this week. I usually have a handful of things I would like to share but sometimes it isn't any of them. This week is one of those weeks. I believe the Lord is having us look back at where we have been and where He is leading us. Time for some examination of our growth and direction.

We are approaching a year since we began meeting. I think the first people to start to worship with my family at home began around the middle of June. Many of us had been doing a Bible study together even before that. As we approach one year of worshipping together, I would like us to take stock at where we have come, where the Lord is leading us, and the fundamental truths we have examined.

Our first Bible study after leaving the Wesleyan Church was the Early Church Government. The main things we saw were how the systems of men today have become so like the world's way of operating. Governmental structures are more like businesses than a spiritual family. Man takes the place of Christ as the head in many churches and entertainment to bring in large numbers is normal or even looked up to. Whereas the NT church had elders who met guidelines laid down by the Apostle Paul of spiritual and lifestyle qualifications, not educational routines of man. The examples of the NT decision making show us that prayer and seeking to find the will of the Holy Spirit through consensus of the godly undershepherds was the norm. Gathering together each one had some gift to share.

Although we have not been able to establish eldership yet we are working in that direction. The brothers meet every month to consider what the Lord has laid on our hearts and address questions. Many bring something to share but I think we all need to work on this area.

Next we looked at Jesus in the Old Testament. It was thrilling to see that the whole Bible is about Jesus. I think it broke down some of our misconceptions of two different plans. Some people think God had a plan and it failed so He had to come up with another one. We saw that God knew what He was doing from the beginning, and it was always about his Son. I grew keenly aware of how much of the OT was filled with Jesus and began to see Him more than I ever imagined.

Then we began our study of Paul's last letters, the letters to Timothy. It has been filled with many lessons but one was to again consider the importance of the qualification of elders. Others included false teachers and how to spot them, sticking with the fundamentals of faith, standing firm in the face of persecution, fighting the good fight, keeping our eyes on the goal, Church finances, love of money and more.

But in our Sunday mornings which messages have spoken to you and been key? I think this is a way to see the leading of God's hand for us as a body for the Holy Spirit will fix in your heart the things of substance.

For me – Die so we can experience Resurrected Life  
Simmer in the Lord all week so we can blend our flavor  
I'll never forget the Sunday we did a Woman's Role in the Church  
Last Week Zech 3  
And Emmaus – the reality of Jesus with us/in us  
That He is fitting us together to be a temple

How have these truths changed you? I'm asking for some personal testimony. Where do you see them/Jesus taking us?

We meet for several reasons: to celebrate the resurrection, to encourage each other in our life in the Lord, to worship, as a body with various gifts, the Savior.

Heb 10:25  
Eph 4:11-16/1Cor14:26

I want to share with you my concern. We have come out of organizations where we are taught to have a little of the life of Christ while we sit each Sunday and listen to the mouth of the body. We expect that mouth to be our ears too. And the hand that will feed us. We come to receive much more than we come to share the overflowing abundance of the life of Christ in us this week. I have been fairly consistent to use my gift of teaching and need to use my gift of pastoring more. Forgive me for allowing myself to become too busy to shepherd you in your growth in Christ.

The first message I have on record sharing with you I shared a story from Rod Cooper. I want to share it again because it is what I feel is truly the Lord's heart for our gathering.

When he was about 10 yrs old he had this experience. "I had the privilege of getting up at 4AM to get the cows so we could milk them. As we came in for breakfast, I would smell the beginnings of this soup my mom used to make. She

would put in hunks of beef and carrots and peas and potatoes and all kinds of good stuff. And you'd begin to smell it.

I remember coming in at lunch thinking that was what we're going to have. I'd go over to get some. And she'd say, 'No Son. You can't have any yet. You'll have to wait till tonight.' We'd work hard all afternoon.

And as we came back for the evening meal (that's the only time my Dad beat me into the house), we would sit down, and my mom would set this huge cauldron of soup on the table. She would put this ladle in the soup, and the steam would rise off it. And she would put it down into the bowl, and you could put your face over it and – can you smell it right now? -- we would take our spoons and dip in there. It was wonderful. I remember asking my mother, "Why is it that we had to wait all day on this soup?"

She said, "Son, it needed to simmer so we get all the juices out of all the ingredients. And then they're all mixed together; that's what brings forth the good aroma. And when you taste it, you're getting the best of what's in each ingredient."

That is the way I look at worship. Sunday morning is a culmination of a people who've been simmering all week in the presence of God. When we simmer every day in the presence of God and then come on Sunday morning and mix all of it together, there's an aroma and a smell of the grace and the goodness of God that lifts up to heaven. And God pulls off the lid and goes, "Mmm, that's my people in Fellowship of Christ in Sedona. That's worship."

God's design and plan for us is to worship as a body – To be a habitation of God through the Spirit. Of all the wonderful songs in Revelation there are no solos! No, a strange (to us on this side) and wonderful thing happens over and over. Everything breaks out in song in absolute unity before the presence of the glorified Lord Jesus. Though each of us has a different gift to share it will harmonize and point to Jesus.

Corporate worship is what He designed us to do, all adding a note to a beautiful harmonious song of praise to God, it encourages us, it shapes us, it should whet our appetite for heaven. Are we simmering? Are you praying through the week about how you can express your gift in our times of celebration of the resurrection? If that resurrection life is in you and you are letting it out, you will have something to share. Let's not allow our selves to sink into the old mold. Press forward in your walk and bring your gift to place on the altar and watch how God sends his fire to consume it.