

This is why the church is called the body of Christ. This is why the ecclesia, the community, is called the body of Christ. It's because a little of Christ is put in you; I'm sorry, all of Christ is put in you, and a little of His personality and expression and gift in you, and a little in you, and a little in you. None of us can contain all of Christ and His expression: no apostle, no one.

Here is His tenderness and love. Here's His majesty. Here's His glory. Here's His strength. Here's His authority. Here's His joy. Here's His exhortation. There is His encouragement. Over here is His benevolence. Over here is His speaking. And over here is His healing. All of this, in some way or other, is deposited either liberally or profitably, and it would grow together and become one new humanity, one new species, one new man, because you are endowed, unlike the lost man, with certain elements.

So, you all come together. You are not a body. There's a foot over here, a hand over here, a leg over here, a tongue over here, another tongue over here, another tongue over here, another tongue over here, and another tongue over here. Too many tongues. An eye over here...and the whole room is full of ears: ears, ears, ears, and more ears. Everywhere you look there's an ear, an ear, an ear, another ear, more ears. All sorts of ears. Too many tongues; too many ears. *Way* too many ears.

My job is to make you a body, to bring you together. And what happens? This drives me. The nature of the church is that all parts become one whole. All are interdependent on one another. However, this is all New Testament. I'm speaking to you of Scripture. Each part becomes interdependent on the other. The eye can never say to the toe, I don't need you. I don't care if I am an ear or a tongue or an eye. I need a toe. I need a kneecap. I need a shoulder. How precious is the body of Christ? How not to be abused is she? Write this down, worker: you will treat the church the way you treat your wife. So, if you're making life hell on earth for your wife, you'll make life hell on earth for the body of Christ.

I met a brother who was heading a Christian movement, and he had been married three times. I thought, oh, what miserable people they are. The way he was in my home...I watched the way he treated his wife. You cannot distinguish between the way you treat your wife and the way you treat the church. I thought my wife would stand up and say, "He treats me and the church the same way." I can tell you; do you want to hear my faults? I can tell you, God gave me many things, but patience was not one of them. I am an impatient person, and I'm going to stay that way. No need to pray for me; I'm going to be impatient (laughter).

I hope you all have that experience of coming together and becoming a glorious, wonderful whole, each part functioning, each part being dependent on and depending on. It's just wonderful, and it's not to be taken lightly, and it's not to be given up lightly. Don't think you can find it over every hill and in just any place you happen to land. It's a very rare commodity everywhere.

Now, the fact that she is His body reflects its importance: it focuses us when we gather. I want to say this again to you so you'll be very clear. Do you understand that as the body of Christ, you are parts, and when you come together and become a whole, you actually become a visible expression of the Lord Jesus Christ? That's the most awesome thing I can think of: a group of people coming together and becoming Christ expressed on this earth again.

Now you begin to get to Christ's heartbeat. I'm sorry if I sound a little less than gracious toward Christian religious organizations, but how can I be when I know my Lord wishes to be expressed physically on the earth again; physically, as He was in Judean Galilee, and as He was after Pentecost in Jerusalem. We gather for the purpose of making Jesus Christ visible. That's why you

gather. That's why I gather. We gather not lightly; we gather not wondering if this will happen; we gather for it to happen, expecting it to happen, that Christ will be made visible.

Hear this passage of Scripture if you will. If all prophesy...I'm going to change that word. If everybody will do something, if everybody will participate, if everybody will function, then the unbeliever and the new believer will fall in this place and worship God. I believe a fallen race will worship God simply because the church came together and functioned. That is what turned the Roman Empire against the church. This is what was driving the Roman Empire crazy. People would come together, and something incredible would happen among them.

They were so close to one another, and it was said, behold how they love one another. It was seen in the meeting: His servitude, His majesty, His joy, His benevolence, His benediction, His caring, His exaltation, His authority, His power. All were manifested when those parts got together somewhere bound by divinity; bound by mutual experience, bound by an interchange of divine fellowship between one another. By that, bound them together.

Their encounter with Christ and fellowship with Him, and their fellowship with one another, and their fellowship with Him, and their fellowship with one another, and their fellowship with one another with Him, have bound them together. Then they come together and become one whole living organism, and that living organism expresses Christ.

I cannot give you a better definition of the church. This is a good question. How do you have community when everybody lives out of town? It's really simple. Some of you sell your homes and move together. That's what you do, and if you're not willing to do that, then you're the wrong religion.

I want to amplify that. Do you realize that Christianity is expressed by its meetings? That our image of the Christian faith is what we project on Sunday morning? That is a pretty poor exhibition, isn't it? That one hour a week we get dressed up in the most miserable, uncomfortable clothes on this earth, walk into a building, sit down, get a glassy stare in our faces, suffer for one hour, and go home; then the Christian faith must not be much. I mean, it just stands up and preaches all sorts of proclamations about what the Christian faith is. That's the extent of God's requirements of your commitment.

Again, that was not a first-century image. It was everything. Paul said, "I don't want yours...I want *you*." But I just couldn't sell my home and move down to some shaky prospect of meeting with a bunch of people I hardly know. Then you really ought not to be a Christian. Boy, you put everybody on one street or two streets around, something's going to happen. They're either going to split to high heavens; that's all right. And, Gene, if I'm living in some house, I will lose all my profit. That's okay. You're going to be here 70 years. That's all right. Lose everything you have; the Lord will not forget that: you loved Him and His house that much. Sell the blooming thing and move.

All of you get in one place, and if you have to, get in two places. Maybe you need to have all your homes in three places: one where the very rich live, one where the very middle class live, and one where the very poor live. I think some of you rich folks ought to get down off your high horse; come live with the middle class. Now you're going to have to move near one another. I don't mind to...I don't bat an eye to say to you, "Do it." Do it. Otherwise...put the fat in the fire. Put your money where your mouth is. Where the road and the rubber meet, or where the cookie crumbles (laughter). You've been talking big; now do it. But boy, don't do it unless you've got somebody around who knows what he's doing to help you know the Lord and help you to know one another, because you're in for big trouble if you think, "God's going to lead us. We don't need any

man to lead us.” Man, you’re in big trouble. God didn’t ordain it that way. He ordained for men to raise up the church.

I love your question, brother. I appreciate it. That’s my answer. I give it unequivocally, uncompromisingly; I won’t back up. You have to move near one another.

Oh, wait a minute. May I stop right there? Where’s the greater commitment, to one another or to Jesus Christ? To Jesus Christ. I’ve said this before. I said, now, the greatest flaw in my ministry is... I don’t know what to do about it, but Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his book, *Life Together*, really helped me. This is what he said...to me. He said, Gene, “It happens not to you, but to all of us, that when we get together in a community, our commitment shifts to one another and away from Christ,” and I think that’s when the Lord steps in and starts doing some really terrible things.

Brothers and sisters fall so in love with one another that they absolutely will no longer follow the Lord if it means breaking relationships with each other. And that’s been a flaw in my ministry. I have seen some lifelong, eternal commitments to one another; people are going to be with one another now and forever, world without end...and Christ has been virtually forgotten in the matter. I appreciate those of you who are shaking your heads. You obviously are saying you’ve seen this too. It seems to be the curse that we have to deal with.

You don’t have to worry about a Methodist or a Baptist. You people, meet one another and just fall in love with each other. A preacher has to come along and tell you that’s a no-no; you have to be told you cannot fellowship with others. We, as theologically trained people, have to ingrain it in our heads. Forgive me if this shows up in several videos; you all need to hear it again.

Like Martin Luther King Jr., I have a dream. I see a day when church buildings have been turned into restaurants. Museums; I see that day coming. It will come; if the Lord tarries, they will be turned into museums and libraries and civic auditoriums and restaurants and maybe dance halls. There are already mausoleums there. I see somebody is a radical (laughter). I see the day when seminaries have become places where Christians go to read. I see a day when people look back on the pastoral concept and see it as the worship of relics. I really do. I see that day. I see that day when Christians stop wearing ties to meetings. I see a day when the majority of God’s people who love Him meet in homes. I believe that day is coming as surely as I have seen churches by the hundreds and thousands lying vacant in Europe.

There will be a change. It will come. Death and persecution purified the church and forced her back to her more primitive and simple expression. Everybody here is saying yes. Not everybody’s saying that. I don’t believe that. I know you have, but let me talk about it for a minute. It doesn’t deal with the root problem. Persecution doesn’t address the root problem. Let China or Russia be free tomorrow, and let us Americans hit those two countries with all of our bags of silver and gold, and church buildings are going to go up right and left, and they’re going to take them. Seminaries and Bible schools are going to go up, and they’re going to say, uh-huh.

Right now, they meet in the woods. They meet out in the country. They meet in homes. They meet clandestinely. They meet in hiding and secret, and in intimate meetings, but their heads are still in the religious system. They meet that way out of necessity, not belief, not passion. When the persecution lifts, they go right back to the way they were. This has happened again and again in Christianity. Now, if the Russian and the Chinese situation goes on for another 200 or 300 years, then maybe that will change, but right now, I am really afraid that if Russia or China, either one...if it lifts, it’s going to happen again. I do not see Spain being blessed by the fact that they’ve stopped persecuting Protestants. What’s happening is the religious system is moving in there by the

truckloads and doing it all over again. So there is another way, but I'm not sure about the persecution that comes with it; I don't see much benefit in it.

It takes one to two years to get a group of people together in a city where they live and bring them to the point where you can walk out of there, and they will continue functioning without leadership. They are not prepared to do this in the beginning, but if it's ever given to them, I will tell you something else. They will be spoiled to everything else on earth for all the rest of their life, now and forever, world without end.

Gifts and ministries; I don't believe in them the way the Pentecostals believe in them. Let me explain this whole thing to you, and I'm going to put this in history. I hope you won't be offended; I hope no one will. In 1790, when France was in the bowels of the French Revolution, and England was scared to death of France, they began to preach that we need the recovery of the fivefold gifts. I don't doubt it was pure, but I want you to know, historically, and I'm not speaking for myself, this is taught in Bible schools and seminaries; it became corrupted and became a gimmick. It became a gimmick to bring people into movements numerically.

Now, some of you must be able to witness to this. In my lifetime, I've watched it happen twice: in the revival of 1948 to 1952, older men began to stand up and say, younger men, we have to recover the gifts. They drew great movements to themselves on that basis. Then they did it again in the Jesus movement, and that almost destroyed it. The Jesus movement started out of the Lord spontaneously, when my age moved in and began preaching the different doctrines of the different groups...there are only three denominations: the doers, the fears, and the thinkers, and they came in with their message; again, the five-fold ministry. I understand that in recent years, as this has been presented historically, the new word is: now we must go from the gifts to church life.

My feeling is the very opposite: that it is out of the organic expression of the church that the gifts come, the gifted men who have grown up in church life. And it will be much purer than the other way. The other way is, as I have seen it, because it's been approached in my life...Gene, we recognize you as somebody. Brother, what is your gift? Well, they're all, in my opinion, not so special, and if I answer that question, then you can come and be with us, be in God's work, and use your gift there, and then I'm part of the movement. I don't believe in movements. I do not believe in movements. I don't believe in movements and will not be part of one. The five-fold gifts have always been attached to a movement and have become a corrupting tool for growth. Ladies, keep waving your heads; you know this is true. You've had it happen to you.

Why not begin with the simple experience of the church and let the nose grow in the face? The gift of evangelism is organic to the church's genetic structure. It cannot be stopped. The gift of prophecy is genetic to the church's organic structure. It cannot be stopped. I don't know what the other gifts are. There's the evangelist, there's the prophet, there's the teacher. What else is there? Pastor and the apostle. These are all organic to the church. I have seen them all come up organically except one. I've seen the teacher, I've seen the pastor, I've seen the prophet, I've seen the evangelist. I'm waiting...I'm waiting for that guy. I believe he's out there somewhere. I keep being haunted by the fact that I once said, "Lord, I'm willing to wait until I'm 60 years old to see this." I've got four years and eight days.

Do you have someone who can show you how to know the Lord as a people? Then I'll ask you another question. Are your people flexible enough for a radical change? The answer is probably no. I don't know anything about your group, but any group that is going down a certain way, Brother John, hear this: going down a certain pattern, and you try to change that, you will lose half of your people every time. It's almost impossible to reform or change a group once it is set in its patterns.

That's why we ought not to have patterns...or to be set. Before this weekend is over, I hope to show you how not to be set or to have patterns. My heavenly day; don't we have any imagination?

Here's my advice to you, brother. Brother Mike, don't meet for six weeks. Don't meet for two months. Come into a living room, sit down; have no singing. Let the person in charge teach you how to know the Lord. Keep doing that for six months. Do nothing but experience Christ for six months, then start having the meetings.

And I'll tell you something else. God willing, we will meet 1,000 different ways, so many different ways that we cannot possibly remember. I will give you a chance. Now, if you start murmuring, griping, and complaining, I have a foolproof way to cure you of that. I'm just up and walk out; I am not attached to my ministry, brother. I do not have any reputation.

I don't equate an apostle with a church pattern, because there is no such thing as an apostle. You see, that's one of those words we transliterated; it doesn't mean anything. What does that word mean? Apostle. It means nothing to my ears or yours. Now, if you tell me your name is Blacksmith, I know what you do; that's not transliterated. If the word had been translated instead of transliterated, it wouldn't have any of the mystique around it. I send you out. You're "one sent."

Now, if it could be just kept that simple, there are some men called of God to spend their lives being sent. And sent... and sent, and sent, and sent again. They'll never quit being sent. Thank God they don't stay in one place. They get in one place, and God sends them. They go somewhere else. That's a rare bird. I cannot equate any man today with those first-century men, but some men have the passion of the bride of Christ in their innards; they can't do anything else, and they're sent.

Now, my job is not a movement. My job is maybe five, maybe ten churches in my lifetime, and that's it...and then die. Curl at my toes and die. Get off the scene, get out of the way, and let God's work go on. Let someone else do something somewhere else, and someone else somewhere else, and let there be the enormous variety of the church of God.

When you get a man who's gifted...a gifted man, what does he do? He has a vision. We're going to have 10,000 churches in the next year... and he's ordaining elders and deacons and apostles and prophets and teachers and pastors and tongues and interpreters and prophets, right and left, people who are hardly Christians. Those people are not prepared for the enormity of these tasks. Then someone says, but God...isn't God able? Listen, there's one thing God cannot do. He cannot transform anybody in five years. If you say you're a pastor, an evangelist, a prophet, a teacher, or an apostle five years later, something is wrong, brother. A cross waits for you.

This 20- to 30-year process. In fact, I'm increasingly beginning to believe that if you get converted at 20, for this business of leadership and key places in the church of God, 30 is an absolute minimum. I started at 37. I got saved at 17; I hit the ground running. I was shooting in every direction. I never stopped for wood, water, coal, gasoline, or diesel. I just kept right on going. Then God stopped me at 30. I had lived about three lifetimes by the time I was 30. I didn't do anything until I was 37. When the Lord sent me, I was terrified. I have to say, 37 is too young...and I was much better equipped than anybody else I've ever met, given my background. I mean, I've been around, folks. I have been around and around and around. I'll be 56 any minute now, and I say to myself, I'm beginning to understand the enormity of this task. I'm just beginning to understand the enormity of this task. 40, minimum, and then I would call you an apprentice.

Saints, believe me, before I die, if the Lord lets me live my years, we're going to see somebody somewhere on this earth. Maybe it'll be in Africa or Russia, but somewhere on this earth, there will be some new church planters. I don't know men who had the gift of raising up churches for

Americans, and I've met most of those who are in other nations. There are a few, and they've either died recently, or they're dying off. I've heard them speak, and they're all scared. They won't use that word. I'll use that word. They're all scared. They're not seeing anything. They turn around, and they don't see anything behind them. I've always considered myself a young kid, and when y'all start opening doors for me and say, are you sure you can pick that box up, Gene? I realize that I'm one of the old ones now, but I'm not going to be scared.

I believe that somewhere out there, there's going to be some more. There's got to be, and they've got to be men who are sent, who've got something burning in their guts, who see her as a beautiful woman and a bride and not an organization and not something for themselves and not a movement to enshrine themselves in history. Men who will pay any price; they've got to be out there somewhere. Now, they may be in Africa. If they are, then you'll find one of my forwarding addresses in Africa one of these days.

I don't intend to see my eyes close in death until some way on this earth I see those men. I'm sorry to talk that way, because it always stirs up some young kid. He gets emotionally disturbed. He says, " Oh, I'm going to be one of those." I (Gene) was born one of those. I got saved, and I started preaching the gospel as soon as I got saved. You're born with those things. You're born that way. It may take you 20 years to figure it out, but you're born that way. You're a half-mad zealous radical.

I'm going to see them before this sad day ends. Now, if that is a pessimistic note for you, then listen, American, you who believe that everything has to be "add water and stir," instant everything, that's just the way it is. There are not many, and they don't happen often. Pray for them; pray that they will come. This is the greatest of all ministries: the praying that God will send forth workers.

A physical body exhibiting the Lord, with Jesus Christ invisibly leading that meeting. Now, Jesus Christ ought to be able to lead some of the meetings we're in. Maybe He won't lead them all, and I can guarantee you for sure He's not going to lead them all, but every once in a while, Jesus Christ is literally the leader of the meeting. My job is to see that the Church of Jesus Christ does that. That is the small task.

Now, this is why I can stand here flat-footedly and say that a pastor, the pastor of the modern pastoral concept given to us by Martin Luther of Wittenberg, which was a carryover of the seven pastoral duties of Roman Catholic priests, stands in direct conflict with that possibility. I will say it again: a church meeting today is primarily for the minister to perform. It is primarily his show. If you don't agree with that, then I'll say it this way. It is primarily under his direction. He chooses the songs that he puts up on the little board there. He chooses the order of service. If he were to walk in and say, today I'm not going to speak; you're going to carry this meeting; you're going to share and announce the songs and stuff, they would not know what to do. They would be totally lost.

My ministry, and the ministry of an evangelist, a prophet, a teacher, a pastor, always moves toward headship of Jesus Christ, of the church. The headship of Christ. Now, that does not end the church's administrative details. Believe me, most of us are so fundamentally disinterested in that; we do not have men taking care of it. It would never happen. No, you will have elders eventually, and you'll be begging for them, but there is that period of time when that one who raises up the church teaches God's people how to carry an entire meeting. The goal is for that meeting to be under the headship of Christ, for those people to be sensitive to their Lord.

Now, I would expand that and say that that is not a meeting or a kind of meeting. That should be all meetings, eventually all meetings of the church, and you should reach the point where you are addicted to that kind of meeting. Anybody who tried to come in and usurp that type of meeting

would be considered an enemy of the Lord. Even if he's a Christian, he would be an enemy of... let's put it that way, the Lord's work. That's too strong, isn't it? The Lord's work in your gathering.

You know, we have seen guests come in to talk to us who could not speak to us because we were so informal and so interrupted and so.... You know, wait, what about such and such? Oh, hey, that reminds me. Isn't that a wonderful story? They keep interrupting the guy, and he just...he backs down. He cannot touch it. He does not know what's going on and cannot comprehend it. I remember one minister was speaking to us, and he finally stopped and said, folks, will you stop interrupting me? I can't get anywhere. He didn't know how to speak to the people who were with him, listening to him, talking to him, and interrupting him, adding to what he had to say.

I'm so thankful for the stories I'm hearing from Africa. I've never been there, but my dear friend, Jack Taylor, told me an enormously funny story about a Christian youngster from our country who went over there to one of these churches and got up to speak. These people were enjoying the Lord and the church and so on, and he spoke to them. They kept on talking to one another. When he finished, they had a meal together, and they sat there talking to him, enjoying everything he said, talking back to him, and enjoying what they were saying. Finally, they said to him, "You know, this has all been so wonderful, this fellowship and so forth. There's just one thing we don't understand. When you came to our meeting today, why did you stand up and talk to yourself?" (laughter) May their tribe increase. May his tribe diminish. All these people are getting up, talking to themselves. You're nodding your head at me, but you're not particularly interrupting me. I'm used to being one with the brothers and sisters I speak to. We were one together. Are you asking for it? Oh, I can take it, brother. I can take it.

Do you not realize that the story that you read in the first century is a story of an organism? It's not a pattern of an organization. It is a story, a record, of that which was a living, breathing entity. They were not following some pattern of man; they were expressing divine life to human beings, just like the Lord had expressed divine life to one human being. And our meeting is a demonstration to angels that we are not organized, that we are not an organization, that we come together, and men see no human head, see no ritual...and if that vanishes from the earth, I don't know what that means. I have felt that there has always been, somewhere on this planet, a witness to the headship of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, if there's anything on the earth to get obsessed about, obsessed about, magnificently obsessed, it would be the church under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ again on the earth today as it was then.

They are the female Christians. They know what the church is; we learn what the church is. The sisters will teach you what the church is. You will learn from them, or you will never know.

I see an organism; a living body. Now, that may have structure; it may have form; you may call it anything you want to, but I am an instinctive creature. Have you seen the study of identical twins separated at birth? They wear the same kind of clothes. They marry the same kind of wives. They build the same kind of houses. They get the same kind of jobs. They're going by their genetics. They're expressing themselves out of the genetic, biological, organic nature that is theirs. Lose that, and you've lost everything. The church expresses herself organically, divinely, spontaneously, biologically. And it is not human; it is divine if she is living by her spirit, drawing from His life.

Stay there, would you? Don't move too far from that. The rest may be all true, but start there. Please, start there. Absolutely. Second Adam genetics. The last Adam genetics. The new man genetics. You will not find much overbearing human authority there. You will find a great deal of love and care. You will find a moving, an organic moving here and there. You will find a great deal of structure in this. You'll find an awful lot of spontaneity. I realize it drives us all crazy because it

never takes the form, and some of us are absolutely determined that it will take some sort of structural form.

Those of you who have been in church life, you were drawn to it by its spontaneity and its almost total lack of direction, and you watched men improve on that. They improved on it and improved on it and improved on it till it ceased to exist. Let me tell you what my number one job is. My number one job is not even to give the church life; my number one job is to keep things out of the church. I have found my number one task as a minister is that when she finally gets to going, it is to keep other things out. The structure and the natural desire to change this, and all the thinkers sit down and start thinking and philosophizing; it's easier than just keeping things out.

You and I gather to shame fallen angels. That's why we gather. Satan is our enemy. That word rarely comes out of my mouth. I rarely talk about the devil, but Satan is our enemy. He's not my enemy. He and I have never had a problem in our lives. I don't ever remember any problem I've ever had with the devil, but he is the enemy of the church. More than that, he is the enemy of God's purpose. We have to come back to what the purpose of God is, and that takes weeks to understand, and it's a many-splendored thing, but when the church of Jesus Christ meets without a human head and without structure and form, Satan is put to shame.

Everything he is trying to do on this earth can be defeated when a people can have an indwelling Lord and respond to Him. That's why, again, I'm pushing off this business of form, structure, move, method, manner, expression, all of that stuff, for you to understand that when you sit in that meeting, you ought to be individually and as a body listening to your Lord direct that meeting. Listening to your Lord direct that meeting.

And yes, I will have to confess again, we will practice. We will literally practice doing that because we seem to have to break away from all our misgivings, but once you break, you will be unsatisfied with anything else for the rest of your life. I could explain to you a meeting that is actually under the headship of Jesus Christ. I would like to, but I have to say one thing here, so I don't get too idealistic. I am saying that a large part of your life ought to be lived toward, even if you don't get there often, expressing the visible, physical expression of Christ when you gather.

Every human being in the church ought to know we're going to have a meeting, and that there is something between Satan and us. This is the one time when the church is truly in warfare. We are here to demonstrate that Christ is alive; He indwells us; He speaks; He lives; He has not left this earth; He is king; He is Lord; He rules the people. He rules the people; we are that people, and we are going to show our enemies our God. When you walk into a meeting, from now to the day you die, yes, gatherings of God's people are immensely important. Don't take it lightly. So I would say, let's put our shoulder to the wheel and revolutionize this from the bottom to the top.

Who is Christ's head? God the Father. Who is the church's head? Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ demonstrated every day, and spoke constantly, that His Father was His head. It is the church's responsibility to demonstrate daily and weekly that an invisible creature who cannot be seen, as the Father was to the Son when He was on this earth, that an invisible creature who cannot be seen and cannot be heard with physical words can nonetheless speak internally, as the Father did to a visible Son on this earth, so a living, reigning, ruling invisible Lord can speak inside of us.

We demonstrate that and testify to it, not as individuals, but as a corporate entity. We do it every time we gather. A new believer can look and say, *God is among them*. An unbeliever will come in and, without an evangelistic message, will fall down in his face and say, *God is among them*. That is the goal of all meetings: to demonstrate Christ's headship on this earth, that He will one day rule

and reign victorious over the people on this earth today who are under His rule and reign. No man leads them. God leads them when they gather and are assembled as a body, and that body is one united whole demonstrating Him. That is the work and purpose of the church on this earth. Amen.

You will need elders later, and you will need them desperately. You will even need them concerning the meetings. Sometimes they will have to step in. But where were the elders in Corinth when people were getting drunk in the meetings? Where were those guys? I'm not sure they had elders in Corinth, and that church was seven years old when Paul wrote that letter. They might not have had elders yet. Paul might not have even had him that much trouble with those happy drunkards. He never mentions or refers to an elder in First or Second Corinthians. Put that in your pipe and silk, for those of you who are authoritarian. Where were the people who should have been leading when men and women were getting drunk during the Lord's Supper? It's a fascinating question.

Well, I'm shifting now. Do you remember the passage in which Paul spoke of the foreigner, the barbarian? I want to talk to you about the standard of the meeting. A meeting has a standard. The standard of a meeting is that anybody within your nation should be comfortable in your meeting, whether he is lost or saved. Now, that is a revolutionary statement. That is revolutionary. Whether he is lost or saved, he should be comfortable, at home, and see only what he can comprehend in that meeting. And boy, that is a standard. That's taking a standard, putting it in a rocket, and blowing it right up into the stratosphere. That's actually Pentecostal, isn't it? Your meetings do not reach that standard. By the way, this is Paul speaking. He said the foreigner should not feel uncomfortable; a man should not come in and feel like he's in a foreign land. Nothing should be going on there that would make it seem like a foreigner from another land is there. Now just take that.

I'm going to put this word under it. The church should express the culture of that people. Now that is a dangerous statement, and I will have to qualify it. I'm going to have to say, for America, our past culture, not our present culture. Never the present culture, because the present culture is not always culture. Can you appreciate that? I don't know if I can make that clear to you or not. The hippie movement did not become part of American culture. The hippies are gone. The Jesus movement did not become part of America's culture. I tell you what it left: informal chorus singing in denomination churches. That's what it gave. It added a little looser singing to worship. That's all the Jesus movement did. It did not affect our culture. It did not become part of American culture. I'm sorry it didn't.

Pentecostals, last year at our conference, someone was leading the singing and started what you call singing in the Spirit. I got up and said something about it; I was trying to moderate it to keep people from being scared out of their wits because, as I recall, it was the very first meeting. I know a lot of people were there wondering what kind of creature I was, and we were singing in the Spirit at the very first meeting. I just remarked that it'll fit for some of you, some of us, such as myself; it's not something I understand; it's not part of my culture. Well, that's all I said, but that's not all I felt.

Do you realize that singing in the Spirit scares the wits out of everybody who is not Pentecostal? Absolutely; it troubles anyone without a Pentecostal background. There is a difference between background and culture, and if we understood that, we should express our culture but very little about our background; we would have had another week. It was a Pentecostal background, and it's just great. I'm not fussing about it. I like to steal a lot of things from it, and do, but one of the things you do that scares the daylights out of us is singing in the spirit.

Now, if you were to stand up and say, "Let us all make funny noises that sound like a Gregorian chant that had no particular words, with no rhyme or reason to them," then that's all right. Well, I

can go on with that. I'll start going...I don't know exactly what you do. I can't quite do it. It doesn't sound like tongues. I don't know what that is. I know what tongues are. I've had a lot of tongues talking around me, but I don't know exactly what it is. I don't know what it sounds like. It sounds like a Gregorian chant; I don't doubt that that's what it is, whether you know it or not. But it scares the wits out of the rest of us.

Now, there are things that Baptists do that reflect their background, and a Baptist ought to really try his best to be rid of that. Episcopalians are going to really have trouble because they have a European background, whether they realize that or not, in their worship, but in fact, there is an American culture. Any human being who walks into our meeting, and I'm speaking of the standard of a meeting, ought to feel perfectly relaxed from the beginning to the end. If you can grab hold of that, we will take our first step towards some of the things, some of the things we can do as Christians for a meeting.

Now, this is what I want to say to you. If you go to another nation and you don't know what church meetings are like, do two things. Go to the birthday parties and go to their sports. Get in on some little, insignificant, not-too-complicated native ritual. Go to a birthday party among Americans, and you'll get a big insight into what Americans are like. Go to their games and see what a robust people they are. A really robust people. I'm talking about things you and I aren't even aware we do. The best way I can do this is to move this to another nation.

I'm going to tell my story about a church in Japan. I probably saw the only cultural Japanese natural expression of the church that's ever existed in Japan. It's all been Western. A group of about 20 to 25 kids had received help from the Chinese. Two of their brothers went to meetings in Taiwan. They came back home, taught it all, and practiced it.

Now, the Chinese didn't practice what they heard; they just heard it. These people practiced it. They began writing songs to their own native tunes. Will you hear that, please? To their own native tunes. They sat on the floor using this part of their leg as their chair. It's not a squat; I don't know exactly what you call it. I don't know if it's got a name, when you sit down on your calves or your lower legs. And they didn't say "amen"; they just nodded their heads. Everything about their meeting was totally pure Japanese.

We are one of the nations in this world that will touch one another. The British don't touch one another, but for some reason, American Christians don't touch one another nearly as much as you would think they would. The British don't touch one another, but for some reason, American Christians don't touch one another nearly as much as you would think they would. And that is, to me, very strange. Christians probably touch one another more than a lot of other people do, but we don't touch one another enough. We could improve on that...a whole lot, huh? Not all of us do.

Now, I've got a rule to cover, and this is just the beginning. I don't want any of you to start thinking that when I started this subject, this is all I've got to say about meetings. There are at least a thousand ways to meet, but I'm going to talk about singing for a moment. I don't understand why, in the last ten years, we've almost totally sold out to the Psalms. Nor do I see anything in the singing of those psalms. I don't see any edification in it. I don't see any content in it. I don't see anything in it. I don't see anything in it whatsoever. ...and Jacob shall arise, and Jacob shall arise....how, in the name of sanity and all the riches of Jesus Christ, do you sing about *Jacob shall arise, hallelujah*. What does it mean? ...and Israel saw something or other, and they saw something else. Sometimes it didn't even have the word praise in it—just words. Old Testament words put to some kind of music that I can never catch the melody to. It takes me a week to learn the thing, and I haven't gotten anything.

I'm going to say one more thing here; I'm running down the present-day singing of songs. Oh, my land alive, Gene. Can you distinguish between fun and parties? Can you tell the difference between what appeals to your heart and what appeals to your foot? I am for fun in a meeting. Don't misunderstand me; I am not conservative with this. You can dance in a meeting. That's fine. I won't be doing it with you because I'm a Baptist, and dancing is sin (laughter). And that's just... You go ahead and do that, but there ought to be content and purpose in everything we do. This thing that we've been doing for the last 10 years, that singing of Psalms, is a total waste of time when there is so much glory and praise for Christ. At least rewrite the Psalms and what they meant and said about your Lord. Change the words and meaning and bring them to me; we're the redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm going to declare war on *background*. What is truly part of our culture? The old classical hymns are part of our culture. Is acid rock Christian music part of our culture? The answer is it remains to be seen. In 30 years, people will be able to tell us whether it is. If it is, then I would say use it. I don't want to say that (laughter); my wife and I will be dead. If it has really stuck and found a place in the Christian faith, fine; I don't think it will. I find it appeals to neither my spirit nor my soul. It doesn't even appeal to my body. It doesn't appeal to my ears. I don't know what that thing appeals to. I'm frightened about that. I think some of you may be thinking, "Gene is really, really conservative here about meetings." I am not. Just wait. I am not, but I want to make a point here. I don't see any reason to sing things that have no purpose, edification, or content.

Now let me tell you what, in this one man's bull-headed opinion, is part of our culture. Do you know that "Amazing Grace" is set to a drunkard's tune? That doesn't offend you, does it? You knew that, and it is probably the greatest hymn of all time. Certainly, it has been honored more than any other hymn ever written. It still gives me goosebumps, and it came out of a tavern, a beer-drinking tavern song in Great Britain, but it was part of the culture, and somebody sat down there and put Christian words to it.

I think we are wasting one of the greatest opportunities by not taking music that is part of our culture and setting wonderful, glorious songs to it that are truly 100% American. We don't do that, and I don't know why. Do you? You take the words and put them to another tune? That's wonderful. Somebody gave us, you know, the commercial, when we say lord, you've said a lot of things. You know what else? I learned that one just recently. *When you say Lord, you've said a lot of things nobody else can say. When you say Lord Jesus, you've said it all.* I accept that tune. I accept that. That's fine. That came out of the soul of this country. I recognize it. Something in me says that's okay.

When I hear the screaming bloody murder stuff, it sounds like it was written in the bottom basement of hell...honestly, but it's got Christian words to it. It doesn't make any sense to me. But I don't want to get too much...if you like acid rock Christian music, have at it, friend. Just do it. I've made my point; at least we are seeing that there is an American culture. You know, it's very hard to understand your own culture. You can with other people. I could not believe the Japanese singing songs like... I don't know how they did that; I can't imitate it. It sounds unbelievable, but they sang beautiful old favorites. Watch a birthday party. Watch a basketball game. What other cultural things do we do that we're hardly even aware of? Watch a picnic. For goodness sakes, watch a picnic. I don't know what else to say, but I can tell you this world is filled with beautiful American music waiting to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, which I believe will outdo these crazy tunes kids pick out on their guitars that I cannot find a rhyme for. I cannot...it takes me weeks to catch it on. They're singing; they're just singing up a storm, but I find it almost impossible to handle.

Now, I would like to, I would like to make a suggestion: that we have song books and that we do away with song books. Let me see if I can reconcile this through statements. I think I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to sit down on the floor, learn how to know the Lord, and take one song a week and learn it. We're going to learn them, and I'm going to ask you to memorize the words. Let me tell you; I'll give you a couple of tips here. I know you're not writing this down, so I won't do it now. If you have a large meeting, then I would say, do a few things. Leave your songbook at home or put it down when the music starts. You can usually sing it; you can usually carry it, but if necessary, get a projector in your large meetings. You will ruin a meeting if everybody's looking at a songbook. I think we have to pull free of songbooks. That's one of the first practical pointers I would give you as far as meetings go.

Now, I haven't even begun to speak of meetings, but since we're talking about them, I would like us to approach everything with a sense of newness. I don't think there's such a thing as a good songbook. I think there's only such a thing as a *growing* songbook, and after it grows a while, I'm not sure, but it should be laid aside for a few years. By the way, there are songs you have never heard before, and I know Christians who won't sing them anymore because they've worn them out; they are precious to some of us and not to others.

You Pentecostals and Charismatics, I can still meet you. Episcopalians, I can still meet you. Hey, Baptists, I can still meet you. We share a common culture, and that culture runs much deeper than you realize. But this becomes important to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Japanese don't meet like us; the Chinese can't meet the way we meet. The Eskimos can't meet the way we meet. The Latins perhaps should not meet the way somebody from Great Britain meets and expresses themselves, but you and I have a common culture. If we use that culture, we can meet one another and have a meeting we all enjoy.

I am prepared to take all the great old hymns. I am prepared to take anything that sticks. Sometimes you can know when a song is going to stay. I heard "Majesty" less than a year ago, and the moment I heard it, I said, "That's going to be with us forever." And that which lasts, you ought to really emphasize, and that which has lasted in the past, we can use again. We can rewrite words of great old hymns. You have been touched, I know, even in church, when we all stood and sang what? "How Great Thou Art." "Blessed Assurance." "To God Be the Glory," "All Hail the Power of Jesus Name," and there are about five different ways to sing that thing. That will not take away any chorus you sing; it won't take away all that dumb stuff we're all singing and generally love.

If we're going to meet, let's realize we have a place to meet, and that's in our culture. We can express, if we can concentrate on this a little bit, we can express our culture. Now, when you go and sit down in a crowded living room at a birthday party, don't just watch the candles being blown out; watch how people sit around in the living room when there's not enough furniture to go around. Watch that and observe it, and you will see the embryo of an American Christian meeting. We can have this kind of meeting. Well, my whole thought is, no heathen in America, no unbeliever, should ever come into our meetings and be terrified, or say, "I don't understand this; these people are a bunch of foreigners." That is in our music and our worship, and please, in the way we talk. The standard for a meeting is that nothing will be there to frighten people who share the same culture that you and I have.