

This is one possibility of what I would do. I would ask the brothers and sisters to start meeting in homes, or in one home. Let's say we got between 20 and 40 people—let's say even 20, 25. Then I would ask them to start meeting with me in a living room, and I would talk to them about how to experience Christ. Now, I wouldn't tell them they couldn't sing or pray, but I wouldn't put any emphasis on it whatsoever. I would probably try to keep the singing very, very light and non-directional, just like most of your singing is anyway. You know, it's just got no place it's going; it doesn't have any sense, rhyme, or reason. You don't know what you're doing. You don't know which way it's going to go, whether it's going to go high or low, high or deep. You don't know it.

I would work for them for a period of time, between six weeks and six months, until I began to see an overflow in their lives. At the same time, I would ask them to live near one another and suggest ways for them to get to know one another better. In other words, you won't have anything without community, but community will not come until there's first experience with Christ. Nonetheless, they would be there. They would be experiencing the Lord. I would give them some things to do to draw them closer to one another.

Now, what would those be? You want an example? One of them would be to have meals together. I'd probably encourage these sisters to do a lot of things together throughout the day if they don't work. There's a raft of those: clean one another's homes, take care of one another's babies, so everybody can have a day off with other sisters taking care of the children, go shopping together, have some sisters' meetings together, and have prayer together.

I'm going to come to some more things sisters can do a little bit later in the time together. I would say maybe one of the sisters, if we have an older one—and we may not, but if we did—maybe giving some suggestions, teaching, if you please, sisters, what to do and how to do it. If that seemed practical, I would do it only if I felt there was an older, very godly, and very qualified woman around to do so. I wouldn't give that job to just anyone.

For the brothers, I would—this is getting into preparation for the meeting—but I would encourage brothers to, at some point, start getting up in the mornings and praying with one another before they left for work.

Communion? You mean the Lord's Supper? Not yet. I wouldn't do that yet. No, I would wait. That may be a surprise, but I would wait on the Lord's Supper. I would wait until that thing becomes a gully washer. I mean knock down and drag out. I don't want any of this Lord's Supper business. I want to see a... a cataract. You know what a cataract is? It's a place where lots of waterfalls meet—roaring waterfalls. I'd like to see a cataract, a tarot when that happens.

I would meet with brothers and sisters for a long time and get them to the point where they would know how to touch the Lord. Then, believe it or not, I'd probably start preaching and speaking. I'll tell you what I would preach and speak on: I would speak on the Lord Jesus Christ. I would talk on Him—His glory. I wouldn't talk about things about Him. I would talk about Him, and at the same time, I would give brothers and sisters assignments. I give assignments at the end of meetings. This is what we are going to do. I will not preach. It's in me to preach, but if I cannot give an assignment at the end of the meeting, I have no business speaking.

I don't do that at every meeting, but at most meetings. Sometimes there's no need. Direction is already in its way. But I would say the majority of the time that I speak at the end of the meeting, I give assignments, just like a school teacher. We're going to do this, this, this, this, this, and this. Really and truly, if you won't do it, you ought not to be there, and I don't have that problem, I don't think. I think most everybody is really willing to do that.

I would start giving assignments. Now, that assignment would dovetail with, or intersect with, the fact that we'd already had several months of meeting in the home, sitting down, and learning how to know the Lord. Most brothers and sisters in the ministry simply don't know how to do those things. I'm going to tell you something else: I'm not going to tell them. They will learn only if they lay down their ministry and come and say, "Gene, show me."

There are some things in my life I hold very, very strongly, and one of them is the conviction that I don't want to roll over in my grave hearing in my grave that Baptist preachers all over the world are preaching my sermons and don't have the foggiest idea of what they're saying. I don't want this ministry to end up being sermon fodder for Sunday morning. I told the brothers and sisters in Canada the other day that I have a whole rack of tapes, and they're marked AGD. They've never been released. You'll have to guess; somebody's got to know. You can release these after Gene's dead, but not in my lifetime.

If you will know what I'm going to be doing in Atlanta, Georgia, with those brothers and sisters sitting in a living room somewhere, you're going to have to come find out. That's the only way you'll know. I'm not going to give this out. You Pentecostals will patent it and sell it. You can put it in a glass jar, and put a label on it, and sell it over television. That's what you do. Say amen. You'll market it. You'll make money out of it.

The reason it is important that I preach and you listen—and I'm speaking as the church planner—is there's so much you don't know and so much you need to experience, not hear about. Now, when a group of people has a foundation of knowing how to know the Lord, and also has the preaching of the Lord to them, and then has ways of acting on what they hear, generally, if God is merciful, blessing comes. There comes an overflow. You begin to sense overflow. People talk to one another and to you, and they share the Lord with one another. Oh, I tell you, the Lord just spoke to me, or the Lord showed me something, and you begin to know that it is coming—I'm using that word again—organically out of the soil. The church of the Lord is beginning to fill with His life, His experience, His glory.

Aha! Now, are we going to have a meeting? And the answer is no. You're not writing this down...you'll make millions of dollars. No, we're going to have meetings to get ready for a meeting. Write that down; that's important. You don't understand that having meetings to get ready for a meeting is very unusual. Yeah. It's wonderful, and it also means you don't have to have meetings all the time. I'm trying to tell you, all of you, that one of the neatest things you can do is have meetings and meetings and meetings, getting ready for a meeting, with that in mind that one of these days we're going to have a meeting. And this will be a meeting I, Gene Edwards, will not be present for. **Audience:** Are these first meetings just preparatory for the church doing its own thing after you leave?

Preparatory for my leaving? Yes, that ought to go on, but not preparatory for that meeting that we're talking about. We're already having church life without meetings; you don't have to have meetings. If you're all living in the same place, you don't have to have meetings, but we're going to have a meeting.

Now, we're meeting to get ready for a meeting. We look at everything we can find about the early church and what it did, even if it's just a hint, and we begin to picture our very first meeting. We get ready for this meeting. I'm not going to tell you what we're going to do. A little later, I will tell you; I'll break this down, but I'm not going to put a hole here because you'd probably drown in it. We do begin to see what this meeting is going to be. You begin preparing your own heart for this meeting, and I begin to warn you of things.

What am I going to warn you to do and not do? I'm going to beg you not to talk so long. I'm going to beg you to learn how to have a beginning and an end. I'm going to ask the brothers to please not be preachy. I'm going to get down on one knee and beg the brothers to understand they really don't know how to share in the meeting. They literally, brothers, you don't know how to share in a meeting. You bring death. You absolutely bring knowledge, and with knowledge, you bring death. You need a real touch with the Lord, where you sit there and share Him. No Scripture reading. No, "Well, brothers, it says here, and what about, and all that stuff," but just, "I saw the Lord."

Now, sisters are more gifted at doing that than brothers are. I'm going to say it now, and I'll say it again and again. As you all teach, learn from the sisters. Paul, not being...despite all Paul said...learn, yeah, I know...regardless of what Paul said, you need to learn from the sisters how to share in a meeting.

Okay, I'm going to give assignments, and I'm going to say, we're going to make sure there's some singing. You will bring the first song, and you'll have to pick it. That's going to give our first direction. You're going to bring the second song, and you're going to bring the third one. You're going to pray, and then you're going to pray. Then you're going to bring the next song, and you're going to bring the next one.

Well, Gene, this is not the headship of the Lord. That's right, it's not. This is the headship of Gene Edwards. Just be patient with me, because you have never functioned in a meeting before. You literally don't know you can, and without this kind of help to get you started, what do you call it? Jumping a motor? Jump-starting an engine. This is what this is. An engine that's been dead for 1,700 years.

I have said this to you before. I want to say it again. Here in this place, throughout America, I have talked to ministers, and ministers have tried to get their people to function, and they report to me that they cannot. That's because they don't take weeks and weeks and weeks of preparation, and don't have the foggiest idea how to have an interrelationship like you and I are having in this room right now. You're interrupting me. I'm talking. You're asking questions. You're sharing things with me. That's very simple. Most ministers have never been in a meeting where that has actually happened with them and their people.

Do you know that? Are you aware of that? They are used to preaching sermons and expecting people to go out and do things without any practical help. And then come and have a meeting in a church building? With the preacher standing there staring at him? It's the proverbial snowflake that has a better chance. A lot better chance. This is going to be in the living room, and you are all going to have an assignment.

Now then, Babs, are you a strong sister? You try to, okay. Is there another sister in here? She knows you're strong. Don't be ashamed of this. I need you right now. Okay, you two are going to sit together in this meeting we're going to have. Babs will bring a whistle. You two are going to sit there and discuss with one another when someone goes off topic, talks too long, or brings death to the meetings. Babs will hold up the whistle; we hope she doesn't have to blow it, but she will if she has to. Listen, I have never revealed my trade secrets till this night. I never have. No one knows. No one knows how I do these things. I always cut the tape off.

The brothers may not...up until this point, they may not function until at least ten sisters have shared. Now, this is all stuff we're preparing to do. In the meantime, we're going to pick a theme. We're going to pick a theme, and all of us are going to go to the Lord with a passage of Scripture or passages of Scripture. We're going to meet with the Lord; we're going to get up in the morning with Christ and with one another toward a certain direction. What will it be? I have no idea, but it

will probably come out of something I've been ministering on. And in this case, it's only meetings(laughter). There are things to say and do, even about meetings, that you can share in a meeting.

We're getting ready for this. Once or twice a week, you are going to be early in the morning, getting alone with someone. You've got a bunch of babies, and so you're meeting at 10 a.m. You get up at 4 o'clock, brother, on Saturday morning or Sunday morning or late in the evening with some other brother who also has to get up at 3 or 4 a.m. You're getting together.

Now, the groundswell is growing. The sisters are getting songs ready. They're getting together and singing songs so they know which songs will be sung. They will even use one of the meetings to say, " We've got these four or five songs. Do you know them?" We'll practice them if necessary. When we hear a song announced, we're going to sing that thing with everything we've got. It's not going to be this long, dead silence stuff that comes.

Now, as the time approaches, I don't know if I'll do this or not, but here's a possibility. The meeting is going to be...when are we going to have this meeting?

Audience: Sunday morning at 11 a.m. (lots of laughter)

When are we going to have this meeting? Friday night? Let's have it Saturday night, just in case a lot of people have to work really hard on Friday. We're going to have it Saturday night.

Okay, here's what we're going to do. Now, we've had four weeks to run at this thing. It's the only thing we're thinking about, talking about, praying about, practicing, everything. On Monday morning at 6 a.m., you will rise to be with the Lord alone. On Tuesday morning, you're going to meet with one other person. We'll work this out in our meetings as we prepare. You'll have this written down. You'll know where you're going to go.

On Wednesday morning at 6 a.m., two groups will join, making four groups. Thursday morning at 6 a.m., two more groups will join. You're going to be in a group with eight people. Friday morning, two more groups will join. How many of you will there be? Sixteen of you. Saturday morning, there will be 32 of you, and that may be the total size of the church, but if it's 100, then there will be three groups. They're all going to be coming to the Lord together with the same thing. By Saturday night, the wineskin's going to almost break. It's going to be almost ready to break.

Then, here's what you're going to do. You're going to enter his court with praises. What you're going to do is: it's 7 p.m. Saturday night, and you're all going to gather in the front yard. You're not coming into the meeting. You're going to stand in the front yard, and all of you are there. Let's say there are 32. And then somebody's going to open the door, and you're going to march in. When you get to the door, if you please, when you get to the gate, you're the one who goes through that threshold, and you're going to have to enter His courts with praise. You alone, standing there under that door, you're going to have to say some kind of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, just as open and as powerful and as released as you possibly can. Did you follow that?

You're going to come into the meeting together, and you're going to announce that song, and we're going to sing it, or you're going to sing it; I'm going to be at home like an expectant father. That's where I'll be, wringing my hands, wondering what's going on. You're going to announce the song. You're going to stand. I don't know what you're going to do. There'll be a lot of things you're going to do, but for the next hour or two or three, you're going to give it everything you've got.

Two weeks ago, I was in Ottawa, Canada. I didn't do any of these things. All I did was... when the Ottawa conference ended on Sunday at noon, I said, Sunday night, get in the lounge, and I said that

no brothers can share until ten sisters did. Who was the sister who was the whistleblower? She actually blew the whistle on brothers several times. The very first person who started to share was a brother, and she stopped him cold. As much as I had warned him that week, he was offended. Well, he should have been offended. He was totally out of order.

He sat down, waited, and he got over it. And the sisters began to share. When Sister No. 10 finished, some of the brothers asked if they could share. Can I share? Can I share? When Sister No. 10 finished, the brothers began to share, and the sisters began to share. That meeting started at 7 p.m. It broke up at midnight, and this is what one sister said to me. When we broke up, we were in tears. We hugged one another and bonded in eternal friendship, forever and forever with one another.

One brother told me it was like I had known all those people my whole life, and that we were all in a church together. We had been together for years. There were no barriers, and we were going to be together for the rest of our lives. Praise the Lord. It was a gully washer. That's what it was. It was a gully washer. Most of the saints in that room had never functioned in their lives. There was no human leader; the closest was a sister with a whistle...and she literally had a whistle. And she did use it. Isn't this incredible? Isn't that simple?

Now, wherein does its strength lie? Wherein lies its secret? Now, you tell me. The motor is the Lord. Yeah, you want to elaborate on that? Do you want to say anything more than that? Do you understand that it is a meeting in which everybody gave? It was not a meeting where anybody came to get. When that begins to shift in the other direction, meetings begin to die, and that brings us up to another point, although I don't want to leave that one, and that is, you've got to be prepared to do this kind of thing over and over and over forever. For as long as this church exists, you've got to do this again and again and again.

Talk to me about it for just a little bit. What themes will I speak on? I want to tell all of you listening to this message. All of you who consider yourselves ministers, please get off this business of getting up on Sunday morning, preaching a sermon on a subject, and then going next week on another subject. If you're going to minister, minister for weeks and weeks and weeks on one subject, and don't do that unless you know how to bring your people to the reality of what you're speaking on. Give them things to do that make it practical and living in their own lives, or don't touch it.

Well, what are those subjects? Well, I could stand here all night long and tell you what those subjects are. One of them is how to meet, and that's good enough. There's one right there. Needed a new way to meet. A revolutionary new way to meet. And by the way... I've only begun to touch this subject because, as far as I'm concerned, what I just said to you is only the tip of the iceberg. It's only the very beginning. Let me tell you what you're going to do. You're always going to neglect that motor. You'll think these meetings will go on like that without you touching the Lord. They will for a while, and you won't even know what's happening.

Now, that's why glory churches lose their glory. That's why super churches lose their super. Let me tell you something, saints. I have heard this said over and over and over again, and I really disagree. I've heard it said, it doesn't matter if the Lord is with us and life is present. It doesn't matter whether we have a form or a ritual or not. The Lord is greater than the form and the ritual. If His life is there, His life will flow out through any kind of form. That might be true for a few days anywhere on earth, but I want you to know that ritual and form destroy and kill life. Form and ritual, and habits destroy life. Neglecting the source of your faith, who is Jesus Christ, also destroys life.

I don't think I have ever met a people who caught on to what I've just said. My only experience is I've come back every once in a while to remind them that they have a nose on their face, that we're having problems now. Why are you having problems? Well, we don't have enough teaching. Well, we're having family problems. Some of the sisters are very discouraged; some of the brothers are having discussions and debates over so-and-so. Oh, in other words, you've stopped meeting with the Lord. It's just that simple. Well, we're doing some of that. Well, then it's time you call me back in. That's what a church planter does; he comes back in to remind you, nose on your face, that Jesus Christ is your all, your everything, and your hope.

You know, brothers and sisters, they have taken two or three verses on the Lord's Supper and made whole institutional concepts out of it; it's unbelievable what they have done with two or three or four verses about how a meeting should be conducted. It's ridiculous. All meetings end, for instance, with a praise to the Father. That comes from a verse of Scripture, from Hebrews. I've got no fault with it, but my land has done it for 150 years: ending every Lord's Supper meeting with a song of praise to the Father. This brings me back to what I was saying at the beginning. Don't we have any imagination whatsoever? Can't we harness it? Can't we do something altogether different?

To have the Lord's Supper properly, we should always risk getting drunk on it. How's that for a beginning? You like that? I can back that up with Scripture, brother. I don't think we should ever get drunk on it, but I think we should run the risk that it's possible. Obviously, it was a very joyous occasion for the Corinthians. Poke holes in that. Just attack me on that. They were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. It's in the New Testament. It's right there. They were having food fights. I've been in one Lord's Supper meeting where I was so glad it was grape juice. God's people were having a ball.

I will tell you, I will make one suggestion for all of you, and that is that on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday next year, go to a restaurant and have the entire fellowship, the entire church, come together and have dinner together in a restaurant. At the end, pass the cup and the bread, and you'll be a lot closer to having the Lord's Supper according to first-century Christians than anything else you've ever done in your life. Now say amen to that. Amen. Isn't that simple?

Why don't we do that? If we were going to be ritualistic, that should be the custom of the Christian church. We do not do that. What night is it that the Jews do it? Why don't you give up Constantine's Easter and go back to the Jewish calendar? What day is that? Passover? Do it on the night of Passover. Oh, you should eat lamb that night. Absolutely. Why not? You ought to go there to have a ball. That'll be a time of singing and sharing and laughing and carrying on and just having a good old time and having the Lord's Supper.

Oh, my goodness, what should we say about the Lord's Supper? Every time you have it, people get really sad. Everybody gets really introspective. Scripture gives no grounds for that. I think the Lord's Supper is being observed totally in the wrong direction. Scripture does not say, "Remember His suffering." It says, "Remember *Him*," and that opens a whole door of wonderful things. But invariably, when the Lord's Supper is taken, and it's a sharing meeting, it's all about how much He suffered, and that can get very mournful and groanful. I know that's not to be put aside lightly, but I don't think that's what He meant when He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me"; we remember *Him*. It does not say, "Remember His sufferings." Now, that's implied in another passage, but I'm not all that excited about meeting after meeting after meeting of the Lord's Supper, where we do nothing but beat our chest about how the Lord suffered. When He came out of the grave, He left behind what was behind Him. He was a victorious Lord, and He's still a victorious Lord, and there are so many ways to take the Lord's Supper. Do you want to hear a few? Here we go.

Have the church break up into five different groups, have dinner in five different places, and have a wonderful, sumptuous dinner with the Lord's Supper served right in the middle of it. Have four or five weeks preparing for one Lord's Supper meeting of the whole church, and do exactly what I just said right now, just before this. Telling everybody they have to come with some praise, some kind of glory. Bring a banner. Bring something of exaltation to the Lord. I've just given you another one. That's having dinner at a restaurant, but I would not make that a quiet occasion.

I would, again, spend several weeks preparing for that, telling brothers and sisters what to do in the way of sharing. Have the bread and have the wine right in the middle of the regular meal. Please stand there and toast the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, literally, offer up a toast to a magnificent Lord. The closest thing we have in the Christian faith to the Old Testament Passover is a toast. Approach it from that angle—a toast to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have it in a regular meeting, it ought to be the whole meeting. It ought not to be something tacked on at the end. But again, you ought to spend several weeks preparing for it so that it will be something wonderful and exciting to look forward to. Break loose from the mooring of the mournful meeting of the Lord's Supper.

Fight whether it's grape juice or wine. Discuss and link how to make the bread. Have it be an honor to make the bread and bring the wine; whoever does it. Would I introduce foot washing into a Lord's Supper meeting? No, but I wouldn't prevent it either. No, but I don't encourage it, but I wouldn't stop it. It's a heavy-duty kind of a meeting, sister. That is heavy. I personally wouldn't want to get caught in one of those things very frequently. Those meetings are heavy meetings. Let me tell you how they usually start, and I love this. Two brothers have had one great big fight, and there are two sisters, and the Lord's Supper is about to begin. Some brother says, before we do, I would like to...the brothers are washing the feet of their wives, and sisters are washing their own feet, and everybody's sitting there bawling and crying and carrying on. I would never provoke a meeting like that, and I frankly hope I'm not in one or two more in the rest of my life. That's really hard to handle. If you've never had your feet washed, you've never known humiliation. I think the guy doing it's got an easy job compared to the fellow having to receive it. Oh, that is really difficult. Oh, that would break the heart of a Bremer bull.

I'm fearful you're going to lose the main point, and the main point is that everything about a meeting has got to be about your experiencing the Lord. I beg you not to get caught up in funny ways of talking, praying, or any other weird thing. Keep it simple, keep it real, keep it American, keep it native to the soil, keep it honest, and brothers, don't come to meetings to preach sermonettes. Sermonettes are preached by "Christianettes." Anything I'm saying to you now, I would say in the beginning of the birth of the church, probably should take two or three or four weeks of preparation.

Have a meeting in which only sisters share. Now then, what you're going to do is you're going to turn that meeting totally over to the sisters. Sisters, you ought to take three or four weeks without us present to prepare what those meetings will be. You will discuss things you want to tell the church. You would discuss things you want to tell the Lord. You would discuss those inimitable things that you can do. Hold a meeting where only the single brothers are in charge, if you have enough. Give them about three or four weeks to prepare. Heaven knows what those mad creatures are doing. Hold a meeting where only the brothers, the married brothers, or the brothers are in charge.

Have a meeting with ministry, and that's the main point of the meeting. You'll select three brothers who have never spoken publicly in their lives to be the ministry of that meeting, and you will be astonished. One of them will faint flat out; you'll have to be carried out. Another one will stumble all over creation, and the third one will bring one of the most wonderful messages you've ever heard in your life. After you've done that, do that with three other brothers, and another three

brothers, and another three brothers, and another three brothers. Always give about three or four weeks' leeway. Say, four weeks from now, these three brothers are going to share and tell them that they can ask the church anything. Meet in a hotel, meet in a park, meet in a living room. They may want to ask the church to sit on the floor. If they want to ask everybody to do whatever special thing they will ask, the church will say, yes, we will go along with that. Are you writing this down?

By the way, all this is to break loose from the mooring of whatever we as Christians have been doing up to now. Break the church into groups and homes, go for about ten weeks, and meet once a week in, say, two or three different homes; the only reason you would meet is to hear one or two people share their entire testimony. Now, a church cannot do that in a regular meeting. It would take forever. You take a hundred people; that would be a hundred meetings. Break the church up into groups of ten or fifteen and give everybody the privilege of telling their story. You will always be amazed at what you hear, and it is remarkable. As close as Christians are, they often have never heard one another's testimonies.

I will tell you this: Usually, the week before we do something like this, I give my own testimony to the whole church, and everybody's always surprised at mine; we're always surprised at everybody's. Even people who think they don't have a testimony can surprise you with what they end up sharing. I think everybody has a right to know about everyone else's testimony in the fellowship of believers. Okay, are you with me? Anytime you want to interrupt, please do so. Ask or add; just do so.

All of these things need three or four weeks of preparation. Don't ever think that this happens easily. It does not happen easily. I would say a church ought to have weekend retreats throughout the year. When some of the brothers or some of the sisters, or some of the brothers and sisters, get up in a mountain or go somewhere and get away from everyone else and have a weekend together, and throw the Sunday night meeting open to having them tell what happened when they were together that weekend. Did you follow that? It's very simple, but you don't need any preaching. Just turn it over to them and let them tell you what took place in their lives, and that's about as simple as it can be. You have a weekend in which all the sisters go up without anybody whatsoever directing them. Let them go up in the mountains, spend the weekend together, and come to a Sunday night meeting to share. Brothers, you're in for a treat.

Now, that will take place only after a church has learned to share without leaders present. When you have finally recognized the fact that you have a right- no, you don't have a right; it's more than that: it's an honor. I don't know what it is. You are the church; this is what the church does. She meets under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and she shares about Him. We always talk about having dinners together, but these are all meetings. Hey, these are all meetings. I don't know if you recognize this. Have a Saturday night in homes, not a home, but in homes, where the brothers have the responsibility of cooking the meal and serving the sisters.

Alright, let me tell you something. Let me tell you a beautiful little story, if I can get through this. I received an invitation in the mail one day that said, Gene and Helen Edwards, the honor of their presence is expected, or is asked for, at the- what was the name of that house? The house had a name, the something house. Oh, it was the Cathedral Oaks House at 6 p.m., and that's all we knew. We didn't know any more than that. At 6 p.m., we knocked on the door of the Cathedral Oaks House. The door opened, and a brother with a waiter's towel over his hand said, "Good evening, Gene and Helen." We're glad to have you. Please come in. The room was dark. Candles burned, and three other families were present. The four families were then treated to a sumptuous gourmet dinner that those single brothers had prepared.

When the meeting was over, and the dinner was over, and we just had a wonderful time, those guys - I never saw it. I didn't even know those single brothers had enough sense to get their heads out of the pot. They waited on those tables. They waited on us hand and foot. Our water cups, or whatever we were drinking, I never got over that far down from the rim. They were around us. They would literally stand at the table like this and wait. A sumptuous feast. When it was over, a group of sisters came and helped the brothers clean up the tables.

One of the golden memories of my life, because this song had only recently come into my life, and one of the people present that night was Jack Miller, if any of you know him. I shall never forget. He expressed in words my feeling. Oh, and I was getting up to go, and the sisters were in the kitchen washing dishes. The single sisters were in the kitchen washing dishes, and they were singing "Sing Hallelujah to the Lord." They were singing both parts, which I'd rarely ever heard. I don't know why we don't know the two parts to that thing. I was mesmerized, and Jack said, "Sounds like angels, doesn't it?" Just an unforgettable night. That's community. That's love. That's unbridled love. That's not going to happen in a legalistic situation. It's not going to happen in a movement situation or orientation. It's going to happen out of the spontaneous life of a church that is experiencing the Lord Jesus Christ daily, or at least weekly.

Brothers, I would tell you, and again, you need four or five weeks to run at it. I would say to you and your fellowship: have a meeting where the sisters are treated like princesses, and the brothers serve meals to them one night and enjoy serving those sisters the very best you possibly can. That's a meeting of the church. *That's a meeting of the church.*

Let me tell you about one of the best meetings of all: when the church is tired, you've gone through something or other, and you just kick it in. Now, you don't do this until a relationship is built up among everybody. There's a tremendous commitment there. You dissolve all kinds of meetings. You say, for the next some odd weeks, we're not going to meet. You'll hear from us when you hear from us. There will be a meeting someday; we don't know when. In about two weeks, you'll hear about a meeting somewhere. The singles got together with their guitars, sat around, fellowshiped, and had a glorious time. And everybody thinks, "They did. What was this? Tell us about it. What's going on?" I don't care how great we are; meetings can take on a meeting atmosphere, but when you cancel all meetings, people can really have meetings.

Did you follow that? They're totally spontaneous. I don't even care if they're cliquish. I don't care if it's just the single sisters meeting or just the single brothers and sisters, or if it's just the married sisters getting together. Still, those things that are put together by people who are just hungry for fellowship are unclassifiable and among the most wonderful meetings, or at least some of the neatest meetings you and I will ever attend. That's one of the best meetings of all. And nothing is more wonderful than knowing that next Sunday, Saturday, Monday, or Friday, you are totally free of any obligation to meet.

A question arises: how does the church meet its finances when there are no meetings? The answer is that brothers and sisters will go out of their way to find the offering box to give because they love her. They've fallen head over heels in love with this girl, and they're going to take care of her.

Let me tell you how to kill a church: kill its meetings. Have a choir. Do you want to hear another one? Have an orchestra or band. I'm going to tell a story. They had a band, and they had these huge, great big amplifiers. I spoke, and man, I'll tell you, that band up there was singing and giving it all. I thought that was the greatest singing church I ever saw or heard in my life. When I got through speaking, I said, "Let's stand up and sing." I said, "What are you going to sing?" We started the song, and I started to lead it, and I made a startling discovery; maybe they did, too. Those people out there in the audience didn't know how to sing and weren't singing. It was all coming over that

loudspeaker from that band, and the rest of the people had long since ceased singing. They were just opening their mouths and something.

In Portland, one of the brothers in our fellowship attended a Pentecostal church with one of these big bands, and one day the whole amplification system burned out, and he said, "I was astonished to find out that the church did not have the foggiest idea how to sing. We had been listening to a band sing and thought we had been listening to a church sing."

I'll say something you may not know about the brothers and sisters from Illinois. They don't ever get together like that under normal conditions, all in one spot or in a corner. They scatter out throughout the meeting place. It was wonderful to see those people, half of the people in the meetings of their fellowship, with some instrument that they carry in the meetings. You'd say that it must be a tambourine. Listen, they have stuff there I've never seen before and will never see again.

Did you see that strange-looking contraption this brother had? It was round. It looked like the inside unit of a thermos bottle. They told me he made this thing. He had a rub board in one place, some little dots in another, and a bigger rub board in another. He had a little thing he raked across different parts, and he'd turn that round bottle and beat on it, or scrape on it, or do something else. He could get more different sounds out of that one thing. He'd sing and do that, and you wouldn't believe it. Somebody else had sticks. They'd stand there with a stick and beat on it. Somebody else had...I know they didn't have castanets, did they? What are some of the other things they have? They have the Congo drums. They had all sorts of little things. I had never seen them before, scattered around the room. That's great. Wonderful...but get rid of bands. I think a church needs to start a cappella; I really do.

Now, I have something to say to you. This is just so simple, so revolutionary. If I ever get to Atlanta, brother, God willing, if I ever get to Atlanta, and if there are actually people here, we're just going to take a good, easy time about when we start meetings. One thing we're going to do, and I recommend it to everybody...we'll do it next summer, if you come...turn the entire church into a choir. Turn the church into a choir. Have a night and let you put the altos and the sopranos and the basses and the, I don't know how you do this, the baritones and tenors. Break them up and put them in place, and then learn a song together that way.

I'll tell you exactly what song we're going to learn next summer together. We'll start with the Hallelujah Chorus. You don't sing the Hallelujah Chorus to get to glory; you sing it to express the glory you have touched. I'm going to drive that home again and again. We don't come to a meeting to get; we come to a meeting to give. Our getting is with the Lord alone or with one or two or three other people sometimes, not in the meeting.

It is a matter of just your imagination from that point on. Get rid of the choir and turn the church into a choir. Have a songbook...and don't ever have a songbook. Have it to grow, have it to add to, have it to memorize, have it to use at home, have it to learn some of the numbers, but either don't bring it to a meeting, or if you do, don't use it in the meeting. One of the most wonderful things about a meeting is that there's no preaching, no pastors, and no leaders, and when everything depends on what happens outside the meeting, you find out how dead the church is or how alive she is.

A Baptist church, if you graph its meetings, always looks like that. That was the revival in August (laughter). Now then, the church isn't like that. No Baptist church has ever had a meeting as dead as Christians meeting without any human headship can have. They reach lower, deeper, deadlier depths than anything else known to mankind. That's when you stop and start taking inventory of what to do about it.

You must spend the rest of your life taking care of meetings. They'll take up a large part of the church's energy. You don't know what I'm talking about, and this is the lesson you have to learn. Hey, listen, if you have 12, 15, or 20 meetings per year, that's good enough. You should spend the rest of the time preparing for them, but you won't. You'll say, boy, it's glorious, and you'll have about 10 in a row, and I wouldn't give you 10 cents for the 10th one, and you wouldn't either. But you'll go ahead and have the 11th and the 12th, and I don't understand you. I don't understand why you don't blow the whistle and stop and say, "It's time we took a different direction and took a whole new way of meeting?" Why don't you stop when your meetings all start to feel the same? Why do you think a church has to meet? What addiction, what angel told you that a church has to keep meeting when death has arrived? Why not stop and start over again?

Take a new look at your mornings. Take a look at your meetings. There are other ways to meet. There are other things to do besides meeting. There are other things. Maybe it's time to evangelize. Maybe it's time to fast. Maybe it's time to send somebody out to the foreign mission fields like Hawaii. Maybe it's time for the church to take a total, absolute vacation. August is a great time to have nothing and absolutely shut down everything and everybody.

Leave and go to a conference, a Christian conference somewhere where Gene Edwards is speaking. Shut it down. Don't keep on with all this dead stuff. Maybe it's time to turn the church back into a choir and learn some new songs, but I'll tell you this: somewhere you're going to have to come back to the engine of your faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. Watch for a series of dead meetings; it is time to quit and do something else. Now, tomorrow we're going to have to talk about where all this is going to come from.