

I don't care if you did not understand me. It is not necessary that you understand me. Your spirit understands. And you really have enough information there, sister, to go do some of this stuff right now. I mean, tomorrow morning, when your hubby leaves you and you're so tied up in things, go get lost. Praise the Lord. Go get more. And those are the deepest things that we can do today. If we don't have a gospel at least this big to declare in these homes, we ought to really go back to the Baptist church, because it's far safer. Otherwise, we're going to hurt a lot of you.

Remember, you did not understand what I just told you. It is not important that you understand. Your spirits understand. Poke around and let your spirit show you that you are from eternity and will return. You're very ancient and you're very young and your antiquity is the future, not the past. Your antiquity is in the future as well as in the past.

Alright, we're going to meet the city of Colossae, probably a town of no more than 5,000, which would actually be a large city at that time. Come with me to this town. First of all, I would like you to look at the economic conditions and understand that it is totally unlike anything we understand. We've seen too many movies about the first century, and we see everybody in their beautiful robes walking around, and everybody's lovely and beautiful in the forums, and the streets are wide, and the chariots are passing by, and it looks really great. But here is the truth.

First of all, it's very difficult to understand that people had never thought that the concept of freedom for the masses had never crossed anyone's mind. The concept of democracy was unknown. People were resigned without question to their position in life. And it was a caste system. Here's what's so difficult to understand. If we were to try to make a chart, we'd have to draw a circle and right down the middle horizontally, we would say the bottom half of the people are slaves, close to 50%. The top half would have to say 48% of them are people whom we would probably refer to today as beggars if we saw them. They are not enslaved, nor owned, but they themselves own absolutely nothing. Do not look upon them as being people employed full-time. The concept of full employment, shucks, didn't come until the late 1700s and the 1800s of human history. These people are simply seeking to do one thing, and that's to keep from starving to death. The average age of these people: they're dying at around 30 to 35. If you met a 30-year-old person in the city of Colosse on the streets, he would look like I do around 60 years old. Someone 40 would be considered old, about like we would look upon someone between 70 and 80. If you made it to 60, you were considered what we would consider someone today living up to 85, 90, or older.

Paul once called himself the ancient one, and he was about 60, and that's about as old as people got to live in those days. Stature, because the food had so little nourishment to it, people were between about 4'8 and 5'4. Virtually no one was any taller than that, and if they were, they were considered giants. You look at someone who's 6'6 and think he's tall. They look at someone who was 5'10 as a giant.

I want you to see the streets. The streets are covered with filth. They're about 5 ft. wide. There's a little channel right down the middle of the street. You can't walk on the street; you can only walk on the filth. Everything that is garbage, everything that is human waste or animal waste, is piled

out in the middle of that street with hopes that someday it'll rain and wash it out of the town. This is where a great deal of the disease spreads from. Probably a mother bearing children would see less than half of her newborns reach adulthood, and a lot of it was right there in the streets. The stink is beyond our comprehension. Flies are everywhere. A typical non-slave is living in a room, not a house. There's a fire in the middle. There may be a mat of straw on the floor. There is a window, and it probably has nothing like what we would consider glass; they might stuff it full of something when it rained. There would be a door. This room is filled with soot because of cooking in it. The people slept on the floor, which was often dirt. Five, six, eight, ten people might live in one of those rooms, and that is the way the freemen, people who were not slaves, and they weren't actually free; that was their home. The slaves lived in like quarters, and some of them had to sleep outside except in the coldest of weather. Their owners lived generally up in the hills around the town to stay away from the stink and villas, mostly small and nothing really you and I would call attractive, with a few really major beautiful buildings up around the hills of the truly, truly wealthy.

Now that's 98% of the way people lived. As far as those who were not slaves, the men walked into the marketplace every day, hoping someone there, perhaps one of the wealthy of the city or a merchant, would need someone to help for half a day or a day to work in the fields or to do something, to haul something. And people lived day to day. They were not paid in money. Neither the slave nor the people who were not slaves. 98% of the population had no idea what money was. They didn't hold it in their hands. They were paid in grain, or they were paid in fruit or vegetables, which in turn they would take to the marketplace and barter and haggle back and forth with the people in the marketplace who had something to sell. Now that's the way they lived, and those are the people to whom Paul of Tarsus is bringing Jesus Christ, and try to remember, he is bringing to them the ekklesia, which is the most electrifying thing that ever happened in the lives of people from the dawn of western civilization. The ekklesia, the most electrifying, magnetizing, awesome, mesmerizing thing that people in a town had ever, ever beheld.

Now, keep in mind that half of those people are slaves. They are under the domination of a wealthy family that may own many. Now, you think of the slave as working around the house. Not so, these slaves actually made a living for the wealthy. The owner of the slaves would send those people out into the fields that he owned. They owned nothing. It wasn't even anything as high up as a sharecropper. Or he might send them into the marketplace with a skill. And there they would pit their low price of their skill against someone who was a tent maker, and the tent maker, any kind of repairman, a shoe cobbler, even someone with any kind of skill, a knife maker, anything that was out there, if the slave had a skill similar, he could always underbid the free man. The free man's only hope of making a living was to do it a little better and hope that someone wanted quality. And that, by the way, you should keep in mind, is what Paul faced every day that he worked in the marketplace as a tent maker. He was constantly having to bid no lower than a slave who made no money whatsoever and took whatever it was that he had made back to his owner and laid it at his feet. Now that's the economic conditions. That's the sanitary conditions. Culturally, everybody had one name. There was no sense of family. If there was a guy whose name was

Apollynus, his wife's only name might be the wife of Apollynus. You might grow up your whole life being called nothing more than 'son of Apollynus,' even though Apollynus might have been dead for 15 years; that was your name.

And each stratum of people, the slaves, those who were not slaves, had certain names that fell within their category. Merchants had different kinds of names, and the wealthy had yet another kind of name, and the soldiers another. And the Romans and the wealthy sometimes even had two names. And nobody who became a Christian in those days ever called anyone by their last name, so that there would never be any knowledge of their social strata. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ was without social caste, but that's getting ahead of our story, isn't it?

Anyway, I want you to see people. I want you to look out here at this so-called congregation. They're all sitting in a home. Let's hope there's one merchant who can read and who has a decent place to meet, and everybody's in this room. There are torches on the wall to give some light if it's at night. If it's early morning and there are torches on the wall again, and everybody's gathered in the morning, and Tychicus opens this letter. I look out at the faces of these people. There's a 30-year-old man who has wrinkles deep in his face. There's a 25-year-old woman out there who looks 50, and if you don't think that's possible, then you've never seen some of the jungle tribes who eat such meager and poor food. They're dying of old age at 30 and 35, and that held true just about up until two centuries ago, when it had been pushed all the way up to maybe 40 or 45.

I want you to look at the old men when they're not so old. I want you to see the tattoos around their mouth and on their bodies. I want you to see the scars. Everybody has sores on their skin. There are several people there with one eye. There are blind people there because of malnutrition. The eyelids have curled up underneath and scratched out their eyeballs. There's no beauty in this room, and it stinks to high heaven because the concept of a bath has not yet taken over the world. You get a bath in Rome. You get a bath if you're one of the well-to-do, and that's an all-day experience for you where you sit around and bathe. These people don't bathe.

The clothes they have on, they have one set of clothes, a tunic, a robe, that's all on earth they own. And before winter is out, there is a possibility that some of these people, in this city, God help us, let's hope it's not the Christians, will have to sell the clothes off of their backs in order to get food to last through the year. That happened quite frequently. Many of these people never had a pair of shoes on. Others have a pair of shoes; it's a mark that they're an edge above. They may have to sell those shoes before this year is out in order to have grain to live on during the wintertime. The biggest challenge they will face next year is to buy one more set of clothes and throw away the rags that they are wearing. Some of the clothes that those people are wearing are patched so much that you do not know where the clothes begin and where the patch begins.

Would you look at them again? How many are there? 20? 50? No more than 100. Oh, I really doubt there are 60 people in the church. And I don't like using the word 'church.' We'll just call it the ekklesia. Those are your brothers. Those are your sisters. And those are those vaulted first-

century Christians we hear so much about. There they are. That's what it really, really, truly looks like.

They're not sitting there wondering about the Christian family. They're not giving a radio broadcast. They're not hearing everybody say we got to have a everybody is going to go somewhere in this world needs a college education, and you should send your children to a Christian college, and there's nobody here going off for two years to learn the Bible at a Bible school, there's no counselor present in this ekklesia. There's no Sunday school; there are probably three people, maybe four; let's really hope there are five people in that room who can read and write. Reading is a skill, and writing is a skill; something like being a CPA is today. It was something you paid a man to do for you, to read or to write something for you. People are illiterate. They don't have Bibles. There's no such thing as a Bible or a New Testament for these people. Many of them in that room don't even understand the concept of what a letter in the Greek alphabet is. They do not have the foggiest idea of what writing is. It has never come up in their lives. Half the people in this room are slaves; the other half are really not any more than a beggar might be in our day in India.

All these people are ex-heathen. They were heathens just a year or two or three ago. They drank blood out of their skulls at the temple. Slew ox stood around and watched a religion that was simply the incarnation of superstition. This is what they used to be.

Then one day, a young man by the name of Epaphroditus came and preached the gospel to them, and something happened that is almost beyond our ability to communicate. Those people who were converted got God inside of them, got the Lord inside of them, and something inside of them began to sing, sing to the spheres. They got close to one another and found out that being near one another brought joy. They found out that something mysterious had happened. They'd been changed. They probably smiled. A smile, by the way, is not something that has been around in history forever. I don't know if you've ever seen any of the old Western pictures taken of the Wild West, in the first cameras of pictures of people ever taken, nobody is smiling. A smile is not something well-known to the human race until just recently. These people actually have something called *joy*. They've gone past a smile.

Now they begin to meet together and learn to sing, and they talk to one another in these incredibly informal meetings, there in the home. And they're the first religion the world ever knew that did not meet in a temple or a special building and had no ritual, but that's not the point. The point is the way they cared for one another, loved one another, and people began to notice when they greeted one another in the street. They would hug each other, and they would kiss one another, probably on the cheeks. The world looked at this and wondered what was going on because everyone else was walking around like a zombie. The only entertainment was for the wealthy. And here, people seemed to have joy for no other reason than the fact that they knew one another. And they got up early in the mornings, and they met together in the night. And it was rumored that there were well-to-do people present, and they would take care of the people who were poor, who were really in need, like a wife who had lost a baby perhaps that day. And if a man got a job out in the

field, and the manager of the field would say, "I need someone else." Well, he'd strike off running as fast as he could to the home of another brother and say, "You want to work for the afternoon? There's somebody out here who needs help." And people began to notice this. And what they were noticing was not some saved Christian. They were noticing something that was going on corporately. And it just didn't fit anything else.

These were the only people in town who had something besides misery in their lives. And they shouldn't be that way because these people are worse than poverty-stricken; they're living on the border of human survival. And then some pagan slips into the room, and people are laughing, singing, sharing, telling stories, and talking about someone named Christos, and these people are mesmerized by what they hear and what they say, and some are saved. They don't just take off, and you go join a parachurch organization the next day. These people don't go anywhere to be saved and to be a part of that body of people meeting there in Philemon's home. That's all they know of the Christian faith; that's because there's not anything else.

And I'd just like to tell you that, and I could almost wish this off on us, the people sitting in that room, with almost no exception, didn't know what the world looked like 5 miles away. It has often been said that you could take someone during this period of time in antiquity, what we call antiquity, and take them 10 miles from home, and they might never find their way home again because no one would have ever heard of their village or town. They wouldn't know what roads to take, and there weren't any roads. They were trails. Now, I realized the Roman roads did lead past some cities, but Colosse is not one of them, and neither is Hierapolis. And when you moved outside a perimeter of 5 or 10 miles, you were as lost as if I were to drop you down somewhere in the jungles of Africa, in the hills of inland China, or on a path somewhere in the Himalayan mountains. And remember, paths were all these people had. There were no roads. And those paths went off in every direction like a maze. And you'd better know which one to take to get to your house if you're a mile or two from home, because otherwise you might never find home again. So, it was the church in Colossae made up of these people.

Now we're about to open that letter. I've given you a background to two letters, the Colossian letter and the letter we call Ephesians: I'm going to call it Colossians 2. It began in the Trinity in the Godhead in the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. That was the ekklesia. I don't know how long that went on because that's immeasurable and non-dimensional, but if we were trying to understand it, we would say millions or trillions or whatever years, but it really wasn't that at all.

We don't really comprehend eternal things, but one day, the Son became visible. By the time He was grown, He had become conscious of His entire past eternal history. He remembered it all. He remembered the Father, He remembered the Spirit, and He remembered being there in the bosom of the Father. He was not without total consciousness of His past. He had only one thought, and that was not your salvation nor mine. He had the thought of expanding or maybe even re-expanding, and bringing heaven to earth, or to bring the experience of the Godhead to man, and

include them. He did not die for you, nor did He die for me. According to scripture, He died for the church. He loved her and gave Himself for her, but when He stepped upon the scene at Jordan, He did not come to save us from our sins. He came to fulfill His eternal purpose, which necessitated saving us from our sins. It was a small part of the greater whole, and His ultimate and mysterious purpose is almost too sacred to utter, and that's to include us in that eternal fellowship. The thing that would be called the ekklesia is the first taste of that.

Now, He did something instinctive. I want you to listen to my words. He instinctively did that which is natural to His species. Now, He is a species, not a cat or a dog, not a human, not an angel. He is the divine species. Now, these words might come a little strange to you, but that species has an instinct, and that instinct is to meet together, to be together. And He was going to bring to another and highly damaged species His own species. He's going to do something that has never been done biologically; He was going to introduce a life form into another life form. If you don't understand this unique way of presenting that which you already know, raise your hand. He was going to put the life of an eternal God into a human being, and we would have those same instincts.

The habitat of God is the coming together of Father, Son, and Spirit by divine nature. He showed us an embryonic glance of that habitat when He got 12 men together with Him and four or five women. Seems to have expanded to 70. It seemed to have expanded to 120. It may have expanded to 500. And who knows? But this is all before His crucifixion. Let's just take the group that lived with Him: 12, 15 men, 20, 70, a group of women. Let's keep it to 12 for a minute. He illustrated to them the Godhead, the instinct, His purpose. He gathered a group of men and women around Him, with whom He was the center. On the day of Pentecost, they knew what ekklesia was because they had experienced a foretaste of it with Him. And I want you to look at just a few elements. One, Jesus Christ is the center, and there is no other center, and it is not the proclamation of Him. It is not the teaching of Him. It is not the understanding of historical matters around Him. These are not facts about Him. It is Him in His presence among illiterate men and women. You can know that the women were illiterate, and those fishermen were certainly illiterate on the day they got arrested by the Sanhedrin. Whether they learned to read and write after that, I don't know. I know that John probably wrote; I doubt Peter ever did, because I'll tell you for sure, he sure butchered up the 2nd Peter. Try to read that in the Greek. Somebody didn't help him enough there. 1st Peter looks really slick. Mark did a good job of getting that all written down really clearly. I don't want to get into that. I'm sorry. But anyway, they were ignorant men. They were not learned, scholarly, philosophically in tune men, but they understood fellowshiping with Him and with one another.

Now, saints, brothers and sisters, saints, y'all, there is one thing that was really missing. If you don't have it, you have no proof of being the ekklesia. Just getting down and dirty, they really didn't love one another. They were there for reasons not divine. They were learning the church, but those men did not love one another this side of the cross. They had a friendship. They liked one another, but you know the stories. You know the stories about how they fought over who was going to sit where and all such things as that. That was not that divine love. They didn't have His

life in them yet, even though he often spoke to them as though He did. They did because he knew they would, and He's not bound by time. He knew they would.

They had to go through a cross, and then they had to go through a resurrection, and they had to go through an indwelling, and they had to go through an immersion in them around them, in and around. He in them, they in Him. These men were changed, and now they have the instinct that their Lord had, and that's to gather, to get together, and they gathered in Jerusalem in Solomon's porch.

And now here's my first question. What could those men have heard and known and seen that they delivered to 5, 10, 15,000 people before it's over with? What was it they heard, knew, seen? What was it that those new converts heard that electrified their lives? Now, that question is paramount to our own day. And in all of our pursuit of the so-called New Testament church, we do not consider this, or we are fool hearted enough to believe that we have that Gospel. And I'd like to propose that we don't, and I'm not presenting a new Gospel, because I am simply saying that Simon, Peter, James, and John presented Jesus Christ and nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was their Gospel.

And brothers and sisters, there's no plan of salvation. He is salvation, and there is no gospel. There is only the good news. His name is Jesus. There is a discipline; there is determination. There was a commitment among those men to exalt and proclaim nothing but their Lord, and that's what those people heard. And I'll tell you, when you get exposed to that, it is revolutionary. Those men had had a revelation, and His name was Jesus Christ, and they proclaimed that revelation, who is their Lord. Now the people went out of those meetings and met in homes.

I'm going to stop there and say that one of these days, probably in the next 10 years, you're going to start hearing about the home church movement. The reason you haven't heard of it yet is because it's not big enough to be a movement, and I am not particularly; in fact, I am underwhelmed by the idea of a movement of going back to a house to meet. Because if we take our garbage into that living room, we're not going to be any better off. Now we're going to be a little better off with the chairs that are more comfortable. We'll be a little better off, and so that's the reason I would, yeah, I'll choose the home over anything else to meet in. But just the home is not going to suddenly resolve our situations. It won't do it.

Now, those people did meet in homes, but they met in homes under the electric message of the Lord and of an indwelling Lord, and in an experience of that Lord. Then, the greatest church planter of all human history arrived in town. Now, the fact that he was not saved did not keep him from being a church planter. He started a persecution, and just in those matters of a year or two or three, there he was responsible for planting more churches than any other man ever did, and he wasn't even saved, because he scattered those brothers and sisters all over Judea and Galilee, and the apostles went into hiding. And there were no church buildings. And these people met in homes, and I'd like to explain to you now how they met. They had a gentleman who would come in in a golden robe with two choir boys behind him, going (chanting). You know that's not true. They did

it by putting a pulpit up here and a Baptist preacher. I guess that means he was like John the Baptist. And he had somebody else to lead singing. Two songs, a prayer, two more songs, another prayer and offering, maybe a special if we're lucky. And then he preached a sermon, and they all went home.

Well, I'm afraid that is what you think they did, oh my gosh, this is what I'm afraid you're going to end up with if you have a New Testament church. You're going to have a home meeting in which five brothers walk in and sit down in the front row, and they're all going to look at their songbooks, and they're going to start announcing songs, and you, sitting in the living room, are going to sing the songs they announce, and maybe, if we're lucky, one or two other songs will get announced, and then one of these brothers will get up and speak. Next week, another one will. And the next week, another one will. And sometimes during the week, they're going to meet together, these five men, and they're going to have a long prayer meeting, probably on their knees, and they are going to determine your destiny for the next week or month. And I'll tell you, I'd just as well go to a Catholic church as go to one of those things. That's my personal opinion. You may enjoy that.

I want you to see what confronted those people in Judea. They knew Him. They had lived in an uproarious, wondrous time together in Jerusalem, packed into homes. They're scattered back into the homes of these villages of their forefathers, Judea and Galilee. They gather in homes. There are no leaders. They don't have elders. There may be 200 different towns and cities, and they're just putting it together, spit, glue, scotch tape, and baling wire, and looking forward to the day when Peter and James and John and Matthew and all of those other guys, brothers in Jerusalem, can get out there and help them. And sure enough, eventually those men do, and they circulate around all of those churches, preaching to them and then leaving them.

Now, if that were all I could present to you as the first-century story, you could shoot holes in it. Then, as we can shoot holes in everything when we use the Bible, it doesn't matter what it is; you can just prove it. Dear brothers and sisters, that's what Jesus Christ did when He was on earth. He proclaimed Himself and forthwith departed, leaving them with nothing but an indwelling Lord.

I'd like to stake out a claim. It's very simple. I happen to be an ordained minister. And in case you're wondering, I have a master's degree in theology. I wonder why I got off of this. Let's come back to...yeah, there are two things I can say of us who are ministers. I'm going to give you a little confession of sin here. One is that we are addicted to ministry; we like you to listen. And number two, we don't trust you. And boy, we don't trust you. And boy, we don't trust you. And boy, we don't trust you; not on your own. We don't trust you on your own. We don't trust you to a living God. We don't trust you. And we don't trust you. And friend, we don't trust you. And if we trusted you, we would walk out the door, and we would leave you without ritual. That ritual is a living, breathing proof we don't trust you, and those sermons are living, breathing proof we don't trust you. And I am 60 years old, and I have never yet met a Baptist preacher who trusted a layman. I'm waiting. We don't trust you. Those people were thrown upon a living Lord, but I may be wrong.

So, let's continue the story. There were some nuts among those who fled. I have no scriptural grounds for this, but I can prove it by my personal experience. There were about 10, probably five young, dumb, unmarried, single brothers who didn't stop in Judea or Galilee, nor did they stop in Damascus. They just kept going till they got to Antioch. And they preached to the few Jews who were around there. Maybe some responded, maybe some didn't. But having no good sense whatsoever, they preached to uncircumcised heathen infidels, sometimes known as Gentiles. And the Gentiles said, This is the greatest thing in the world.

They got the meeting and these guys preaching to them, and one day, one must have come to his senses and said, "Hey, these people are all heathen. Get an apostle up here and let him say grace over this or tell us we've done the wrong thing." And the apostles, having heard about it, could care less. They, after all, had been called to the Jews. And so, they sent in the B team. They sent one lone brother up there to inspect the situation, but I think that one lone brother was getting a little concerned about...by the way, by now they were back in Jerusalem again, and in Jerusalem, things weren't doing too well, freedom-wise. And that brother looked this situation over and went over and got another Hebrew who had grown up among the Gentiles, who didn't seem to fit. And those two men, for the next four years, went house to house along with three other men preaching the Gospel to a church that has been estimated, because of second-century facts, that the first-century church in Antioch probably had between two and 10,000 people in it. And they met in homes, and they even know the district name of it. It is a historically recorded fact that in a certain ghetto type part of the city, very poor, that's where the Christians lived. It was a huge city, the second largest in the world.

For four years, the people met in homes, and every once in a while, somebody came roaring through and preached to them; the rest of the time, they were on their own. What they were hearing was Jesus Christ. Now again, I may not have presented this to you correctly, but brothers and sisters, from here on, it's downhill. The story is indisputable. Two of those five men got called to the Holy Spirit to go out, and they did. I want you to listen very carefully. They were not pastors, and they were not missionaries, and they were not evangelists.

Two years ago I received an invitation to attend the summit meeting of the world of the Lison Committee's world evangelization something or other, I've forgotten the other word, and the heads and the leaders of evangelism around the world South America, Africa, Europe, and North America would all converge on Budapest Hungary and they would bring together the leaders of Eastern Europe and Russia, Soviet Union at that time, and they would discuss with them how to evangelize Eastern Europe and Russia. And I listened to the leaders of evangelism throughout the world, for six days, standing and proclaiming how to do it. And I listened to them.

Now, I'd like to share something with you that you may never grasp, but let me share it with you anyway. They grew up in America in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. The father of this gospel was Dwight L. Moody and R.A. Torrey. Today, it is called evangelical Christianity. It was, if you speak theologically, I will just speak very theologically. In theological books and in the history of

theology, it is called revival evangelism. And it's probably the only gospel you've ever heard. And this is the tenets of that gospel. You are lost and you need to be saved. Point one. Every verse in the New Testament proclaims that. No matter who gets up to speak, that's what that verse says. Take any verse. That's what it says. Or it says, "You are a Christian. Get a wiggle on it, buddy, and start winning people to Jesus Christ." Point two, and that's all the New Testament says. And as a Baptist, I can tell you that revival evangelism is virtually the only thing we Baptists have ever preached. Every once in a while, we throw in a sermon on comfort. That's it. Oh, that's not to mention money, but our basic gospel is you're lost, get saved. You're saved; save somebody. And I listened to these men, and every one of them preached a revival theology, and every one of them stood up there and said, "And Paul and Barnabas went out from Antioch to win people to Jesus Christ." That is not true. They went out to bring forth the ekklesia to this earth, and they won people to Christ to build the church. You don't build a church to win people to Jesus Christ.

They gathered the people together as believers. And the most incredible thing, how church centered they were, was unbelievable. How much their minds were on the ekklesia. This is really raw. I don't understand this. I can never comprehend it. They had raised up one or two churches in one area, one province, or even one region larger than a province, and then they would say this region's evangelized, and they'd take off to raise up the church in another place. They knew that the ekklesia would take care of the rest. It's astounding.

Those men went out to give the Gentiles the body of Christ. They went out with a love and passion for that which they had lived in the midst of and fell in love with. They lived in the presence of the love of God for them and the love of God for one another, and they went too. Well, I'll tell you where they went first. They went to Cyprus and found out in every village in town there was a Jewish church, and the Jews would not preach to the heathen, and those little clusters of five or 10 people, they couldn't break that mold, and they left Cyprus and they took off for parts unknown.

Now, brothers and sisters, comes the most phenomenal thing this world has ever seen. What came forth was a pattern, a way that's remained unbroken throughout the life of Paul of Tarsus. By the way, I think that Barnabas returned to Cyprus when they got this matter of Jews and Gentiles settled, and he went back there to make sure that those Jewish churches started winning Gentiles to the Lord, but that's ahead of my story. I want you to listen to this. And if you don't have a copy of the Modern English New Testament, or it's called the Berkeley edition, it's a fascinating version to hold because it has dates written on the side. This happened in March 54 AD, and they've taken all the learning of scholars throughout the centuries on these dates, and they've written them in, and this stuff is pretty set.

They went to Galatia. They raised four churches, and they spent approximately four months in each town, over a period of four to six months, over a period of two years. The rest of the time, they spent traveling. Now, I want you to try to understand this. This man right here is a blood-drinking heathen. He goes to the temple every week, sacrifices to some god, and drinks some ox blood. He has never heard the name Jesus Christ; he cannot read or write. This is a farmer, F. A.

R. M. E. R. Farmer. This is a farmer. I can't pronounce that word so people can understand it. This is an unemployed person who stands in the streets every week, hoping that he'll get employed. All these men are illiterate. This is a slave of one of the rich people. This man is a Greek merchant who sells pots and . . ., but they're all heathen, and their main religion is superstition. Never forget that. The largest religion in the world is superstition. No matter what name you may fly under, paganism, Shintoism, or Buddhism, you're mostly superstitious.

Two men walk into a place called Antioch Pisidia. Two men go later to a town called Iconium. Two men go to a place called Lystra. Two men walk into a town called Derbe. And they stay for four months. That's all - four months. They are not evangelists. They are church planters. They are Apostles. They plant churches. Forget Apostles; they plant churches. That's what they do. They do it instinctively. They do it by calling. They led these people to the Lord, and then they gathered them in somebody's house, and the instinct came; it's the instinct to be together. And the most incredible thing is that at the end of two or three or four months, those people fall in love with one another, and they'd give their life to each other.

Now, you ask about how to meet; I'm going to tell you how to meet. First, you get a church planter, that's why I said you have to start all over again, because you have to have a new beginning. You need someone who will proclaim only Jesus Christ to you. Just the Lord. Not eyeballs in Daniel or dragon's tails in Revelation. Not once saved, always saved. Not baptism nor baptism of the Holy Spirit. Not predestination. Not all the things that we have warped the gospel with. Christ.

And something inside sings, and something inside joys, and something inside falls in love with this incredible, glorious, unbelievable, matchless, incomparable Lord. And then I use a secular word; I'm qualifying the word: something magic happens. It's not magic. Something glorious happens, something wondrous, unbelievable in this interchange of love between an indwelling Lord and that redeemed one. That which is going this way up and down begins going this way, and that's the love of the brethren. And that's the closest thing to heaven we're going to know this side of death.

And I'm going to stop and get off the subject for a minute. And I can tell you, I'm speaking as a Baptist. Forgive me, but I am a Baptist. I have a license. It's on my desk at home. I have a license to hunt Baptist. I have a license. I have been licensed by Baptists; I can pick on Baptists. I won't pick on the Methodists or the others. I was once an evangelist in the modern tradition of that term. I preached all over North America. I doubt that there was a man, as young as I was at that time, doing so many things that took in so many people. Well, there might have been, but I didn't know of him, and by the way, I was not impressed. You can't imagine how many platforms I have stood on of every kind of evangelical church there is. I just thought Baptists were in trouble, and then I discovered it was international, worldwide. But there was one thing I never discovered nor found anywhere. And this is not criticism. It's an observation. And this goes all the way back to my childhood. First Baptist Church, Bay City, Texas. First Baptist Church, Conroe, Texas. First Baptist Church, Commerce, Texas. My home church when I was in seminary, and the church that

I was a member of when I moved to Tyler, Texas, as an evangelist. Those are the five churches that I was in the longest, plus the two churches I later pastored. That's seven churches, not of Asia, but of America.

There was one thing that could not be said. We did not love one another. That's not a criticism. Saints, we didn't know one another. We had two or three friends; we might have cared for them. One thing that was obvious was that they were always in trouble. They were always having problems. I thought I had the most cursed friends in the world, and then I got into the body of Christ and found out that that's also universal.

Dear brothers and sisters, it was born in Galatia, love for one another more intense than can be described with the human tongue, and that which your spirit hungers for and will never rest until it finds. You've got an instinct for the body of Christ and nothing else on earth, no seminars, no revival, no sermons, no parachurch organizations - nothing - will ever satisfy except that dynamic thing that happens when a group of brothers and sisters, centered on and experiencing Jesus Christ, come together and fall in love with one another.

Here is the great imponderable. Those two nitwits, better known as Barnabas and Paul, had the insane notion that at the end of four months they could leave these heathens and that the ekklesia would survive, without a seminary, Bible school, Bible song book, church building, or a parachurch organization. And they walked out. They didn't walk out and come back next week; they walked out for up to two years. They trusted laymen. They trusted laymen. They trusted laymen. They trusted laymen, only they weren't laymen because the two church planters weren't clergymen. I want you to remember the Roman Catholic Mass. Is that what they had? John Calvin's Sunday morning church service, which you have been so blessed with for 400 years. The Eastern Orthodox way.

There are several ways I'm not going to mention. And in our day, you know, we've had this revival of worship. Boy, I hope I can get those next two sentences out without anybody getting up and walking out on me. You've had this movement of worship in the church. Saints, we aren't going to get nowhere till we get two things out of the way. Ritual in the way we meet, and somebody preaching to us to death every Sunday. And you can revive worship, and you can bring in any program you want to on this planet, but until those two things crumble, we will not know, in reality, the body of Christ. It isn't possible. And everything else is patchwork.

They left these people without a minister. And please, brothers and sisters, read your New Testament. They left them without elders, and now you have the genius of God. These brothers and sisters have met, and they have been helped by two church planters, and that is an unmovable principle. But here's another one. The church planter leaves. He departs after giving help, and he doesn't appoint elders.

These people are thrown on one another and the living God to figure out how to meet, and I'll bet a nickel to a hole in the donut I know what you're thinking. Hot dog! Let's get 15 people together,

and let's get together, and we're going to meet. You've left out two ingredients that you cannot get along without. And that is the proclamation, the centrality, and the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed to you until He becomes a burning revelation in your life, and number two, the help of that guy who leaves after four or five months. And without that, I'll tell you exactly what you're going to have.

Let's say there are 20 of you and you're all going to meet in the home, and you get in there, and you're going to find out how to meet. You're going to do just like we did in Tyler, Texas, in my living room. By the way, we were meeting in someone else's home, and she got terrified and told everybody, "No, no more of this. This is getting serious." You know, she was a great nationally known Bible teacher, but then she realized she had something by the tail she had to let go of. And I was gone, and these Christians had the audacity to break into my home one Sunday, climb through a window, open my house, and start meeting in my living room. And that's how it ended up in my house; I would have never tolerated it. They were even afraid to meet in their own home. This was a long, long, long time ago. I had black hair. That's how long ago it was.

We sat down in that living room, and we stared at one another, and there came the sound of death's own silence. And you've been in that meeting; I know you have. And probably someone says, 'Can we turn to number 33 in the Baptist hymnal and sing Amazing Grace?' And everybody sits there and wonders if they should sing Amazing Grace. And then they open it. "Amazing. Grace, how sweet the sound is." We get through that dirge and another five minutes of silence while we sit there. We are saved, but we do not know Him. We don't really know...we haven't been flabbergasted by Jesus Christ. We haven't been overwhelmed and steamrolled by a living, triumphant, enthroned, ascended, ruling, reigning Lord. We have not seen Him.

And number two, we ain't had no help. And that's where the home church movement is headed. Here are people who have a little help, and they're together, and they meet together, and here's what comes out. What comes out, Gene? I don't have the foggiest idea what came out; all I can tell you is this: it matched those people in that area with that language and that culture. It matched them. And in the United States of America, fellow Americans, you nor I have never seen, I'm speaking generally, very generally, you and I have never seen a natural, organic American expression of the church of Jesus Christ. All in the world we have ever seen is what John Knox got from John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1540, in a conference that he took to Scotland, that came to America on the Mayflower and has been perpetrated off on you and me. That's all we know about the ekklesia when it gathers. We don't know what Americans do when left on their own in the presence and the glory of the Lord when they themselves come together under His headship.

All I can tell you is this. Please listen carefully. When another...and we'll take the town of Iconium...when another Iconium came in and sat down in one of those meetings, he felt at home; even though he was a heathen, it fit him. And in Lystra, it fit him. And in Debre, it fit him or her. And I'm speaking, of course, from Corinth. Here is the overriding principle of the church of Jesus

Christ when it meets, and it is this: that when you walk in, you ought not to feel like you are a foreigner. Nor should you say these people are foreigners. It should match your culture, your language, your national heritage, and your people, and that can't be done except by discovery. By discovery. *It is discovered by the body of Christ.* And it is unique to that city. I can go to any Baptist church on this planet, and I can tell you exactly how we're going to meet. I can go to any Methodist church on this planet, and I can tell you how we're going to meet. We met that way 250 years ago, and we're going to meet that way 250 years from now. And you can go to any Presbyterian church, virtually any on this planet, and if it's a mainline Presbyterian church, you'll know how it's going to meet. But boy, when you went to Lystra, you didn't know what you were going to run into if you were from Derbe.

And saints, that's how they did it on their first trip. Those two church planters came back and gave them to the elders. So, Gene, the church did have elders. Yes. And after that, they developed a ritual, and five elders came in and walked in and sat down in the front row with briefcases, suits, and skinny ties, and announced all the songs. Let me tell you something. My instinct says that if the elders that those two men appointed had tried that, the Lord's people would have killed them, strung them up because they had gained freedom, and those elders didn't want to take that freedom away. Besides, you have to understand what an elder was on that day. He was one of the people who six months or a year or two years ago wasn't an elder. Now, this brother is an elder, but this brother knows him really well. He knew him before he was an elder. He knew him when he was struggling. This brother doesn't have all that prestige that comes with that spooky word that we have turned into a system. Even the elders are organic saints. And I'll never get this over, certainly not tonight.

You see my nose? I want you to look at it really well. You will notice, please, keep looking. This is no ordinary nose. I belong to a species in which there are no noses. This was built by a plastic surgeon. You think I can get you to believe that? Do you know how I got that nose? I got it by being a human being. That's how I got it. It's organic to my species. And brothers, why in the world have we been seeking after the gifts? I do not know. Why don't you seek after a nose? These things beautifully and naturally develop within an unhindered group of people who are not being controlled and who are not trying to develop a New Testament order. There was no New Testament order; there was something that was instinctive to our species. It's recorded in a book. You do not copy it. You leave it alone, and it comes naturally to the body of Christ. Anybody who can understand that, would you please say amen?

Can you possibly understand how much we could be liberated from if we knew that a body of people left alone on their own, who have discovered and experienced Him, can and will discover and experience a way to meet, and those things that the church needs will naturally come forth?