



THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORSHIP (ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY JOHN BOYD)

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Our Present Witness

Today, we are thankful for the gathering of His people for exaltation, edification, evangelism and encouragement based on scripture's pattern of joint participation and contribution. It is a priceless privilege that we should cherish and strive to bring all who love the Lord into its joy and blessings.

The purpose of gathering to remember the Lord is to give to Him rather than to receive from Him; how fully prepared then, ought we be so that the meeting will be a reverent, respectful and unbroken worship ascending to the Lord. It is essential to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to meditate on the person of Christ (His programme and performances while on earth, and His finished and perfect work on the cross) even while apart during the week, since

this same Holy Spirit will lead us together in our exaltation of Him. Rising then to the meaning and majesty of this holy occupation, having regard for its theme, and seeking consistent worship, will bring delight to our Heavenly Father and honour the Lord Jesus. This bears on our assembly life and affects our spiritual life.

Our Present Worship

It is helpful to review biblical principles to encourage participation in our assembly meetings. All believers' practice of their priesthood should be acknowledged and exercised at the Breaking of Bread worship and prayer meeting, especially for brothers. We thank the Lord for the leading and the unction of the Holy Spirit in preparing one's heart to praise and pray to exalt the Lord, ending with the preaching of God's Word to edify.

Let's consider the Spirit's leading in the Breaking of Bread worship. Here we find whether or not it is scriptural for several to take an audible part at the gathering guided by the Spirit. How a remembrance feast functions are confirmed in Acts chapter 20 verses 7 to 12 and 1 Corinthians chapters 11 to 14. In the book of Acts chapter 20, Paul appears to have been the sole speaker because it was a rare and restricted occasion, and the people would benefit greatly from the apostle's gifted teaching for edification under the Spirit's leading. 1 Corinthians chapters 11 to 14 then focuses on the normal functioning of the Lord's Supper and is left for our instruction

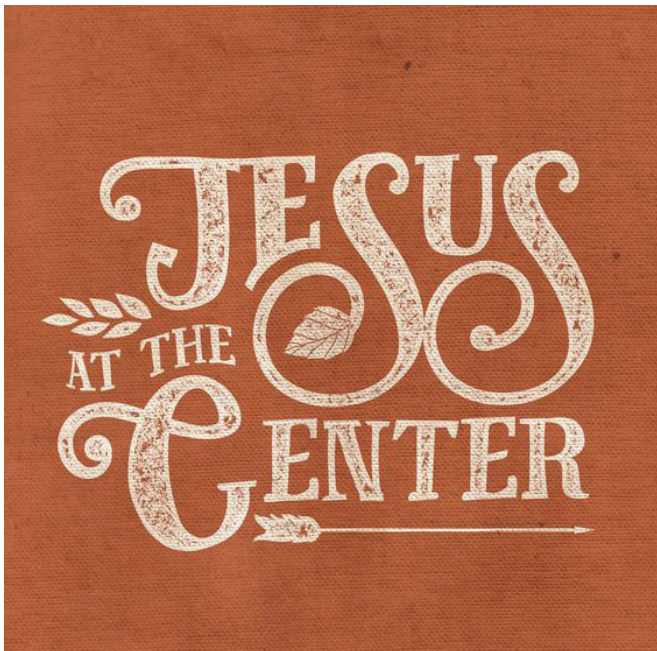


today. The use of the expression 'when ye come together' (1 Cor. 11:18) indicates that both chapters refer to the same meeting. Thus, at the Lord's Supper in Paul's day, there was an opportunity for thanksgiving (1 Cor. 14:16), singing, ministry, prophetic revelations and the speaking in tongues and their interpretations (v. 26). Several brothers engaged in the exercise of these gifts (v. 29). All gifts were not resident in one person (1 Cor. 12:11).

Practical guidelines for any brother to take part in worship

How does a brother know when to participate? How does he avoid confusion? While there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, it is reasonable to conclude that He who led the believers during the week would not be absent at the Lord's Supper. The Spirit leads in the gatherings of the saints precisely as He does in everyday living. His guidance is not a result of special prompting, emotional crisis, or impulse. It comes not through feelings but out of an intelligent assessment of what is suitable for the occasion; it is an exercise of understanding (1 Cor. 14:15); it is the consequence of coming to the meeting with a basket full of praise—a mind stored with God's Word, a heart filled with God's worship. The Holy Spirit prepares the heart and mind before the meeting. He may or may not provide the opportunity at the meeting to use what He has given; the Spirit will indicate this opportunity when it presents itself. Quiet moments can be precious with a spirit of worship, but if such quiet moments become prolonged due to a lack of exercise arising from distraction or unpreparedness, worship will be lean.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PREPARES THE HEART AND MIND BEFORE THE MEETING. HE MAY OR MAY NOT PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY AT THE MEETING TO USE WHAT HE HAS GIVEN;



Praying, praising, scripture reading, singing and speaking are all functions of the believer's spirit, whether audible or inaudible. This is under the person's control (1 Cor. 14:32); it is the sphere of the Spirit's operations (Rom. 8:16). Being familiar with our hymn book and songbook also contributes to the enhanced quality of worship.

Principles from 1 Corinthians chapter 14 on when a brother should take part under the Spirit's control:

- a) His exercise should be for the Lord's glory (v. 25).
- b) He is exercised to exalt, edify and encourage (v. 26, 31).
- c) Several should take part guided by the Spirit's leading (v. 29)
 - A few brothers may offer a prayer of praise.
 - A few brothers may read a Bible passage to exalt the Lord.
 - A few brothers may offer a hymn or spiritual song.
 - Others may use their gift in an orderly fashion to edify the body or exalt the Lord.

- d) There should be waiting for one another: one by one (v. 31); no rushing (1 Cor. 11:33).
- e) Meeting in order and unity (v. 33).
- f) Moved and motivated by love (1 Cor. 13:1, 4–5)

The Spirit's guidance at the Breaking of Bread worship will be more appreciated if He has consciously led the believer through the week. Hatred, wrath, strife and envy among brethren are works of the flesh and prevent discernment of the Spirit's leading. Such a brother should obey the Lord's injunction as in Matthew chapter 5 verse 24. A conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit is essential, recognising one's unworthiness and inability. One who wants to take part must learn to distinguish between the leading of the Spirit and the promptings of the flesh. His glory and what credit he can get must not be considered. Neither shall he be bound by tradition: 'I have always done this' or 'this is the best way to do it'. Circumstances will often guide the believer as to what part, if any, the Holy Spirit would have him take. The Spirit leads in this manner in the assembly of God's people. We should seek to walk by the Spirit, to be led by Him in our secular lives, and that assembly life will be but a continuance of that control. Thus, in all things, the Lord will be glorified.