



Why we gather?

To encounter Jesus presence and welcome his work.

Date: Sunday 31st October

Speaker: Andrew & Rosie McNeil

Key Verses: Matthew 18:20, 1 Corinthians 12, Acts 2, 4 and 13.

Talk Summary:

- The weekly gathering of a church is an expression of Jesus's greater heavenly gathering or the universal church. The gathering of a church is like an "embassy" of Christ's kingdom. It's a glimpse of the future made visible here and now. We gather in order to represent heaven's rule and culture, to establish a visible outpost of Christ's kingdom.
- Some spiritual practices are personal and quite private, some are collective and very public. We need to have a "both and" situation. The private and public spiritual habits are like the two wings of a plane. "Why we gather" looks at some of those collective and public spiritual habits.
- The early church started worshipping Jesus as God every Sunday as that was the day Jesus rose from the dead. As we gather, we declare Jesus is Lord, He is alive and we live a "God first" start to our week.
- Church is meant to be a taste of heaven here on earth. We worship Jesus, and we see the kingdom of heaven at hand as the Holy Spirit gives us a glimpse of what is to come.
- We gather to encounter His Presence and welcome His work. Jesus promised to be with us. Matt 18:20- When Jesus says He's "there," He means the gathering represents Him. It speaks for Him. It bears His authority. He's present and He's working.
- In the book of Acts, we see a picture of expectant waiting for God to work as the Church gathered. The story of Pentecost Acts 2:1-4 is just a beginning. Acts 4:31- A community under threat gathers to pray. They wait on God with expectation and God empowers them. Also in Acts 13:2 we see expectant waiting in prayer and fasting and then God speaks.
- Most of us think of about waiting with frustration. Biblical waiting is with anticipation (of what God will do).

- In all of these stories in Acts, the Holy Spirit moves in the gathered Church. We see that they are gathered to scatter. The Apostle Paul refers to us as Christ's ambassadors 1 Cor 5:19. That's drawing on the embassy analogy. We represent Jesus to all those we meet.
- As we gather, we're expectant for the work of Jesus, so we welcome his work. So what does that look like? Sometimes we experience a stillness that goes beyond silence in a room. Many people report a feeling of being home. We sense the welcome of God by the Spirit of God.
- Sometimes the presence of God affects us at the level of the heart or soul. Things that have been under the surface can come into focus as God starts to bring healing or comfort. He's taking some of the healing and comfort that will be fully known in our future and making it visible and available here and now as he moves by his Spirit.
- As we gather we see the gifts of the Spirit in action as gifts are given in the context of others. See 1 Corinthians 12. The gifts and the working of the Spirit are for the collective good not the individual good.
- The invitation is to come consistently, come expectant and come to participate.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

1. We are easily distracted and often impatient. What can help us stay in a place of expectant waiting on God? Explore spiritual practice like thanksgiving, silence, breath prayer.
2. Share as a group what else helps you become aware of God's presence and work (as we gather).
3. Consider the illustration of God distributing gifts for us to pass on. What are some of the ways people hear from God?
4. What does "come expectant" or "come prepared" look like? Maybe think of this in terms of what are the biggest barriers to expectation or spiritual preparation?
5. Why don't you swap some stories of when God has met you in the gathered Church?

Witness - *How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?*

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?