



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

The Local Church

“Its Priesthood”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Now today we are continuing our series in the local church in the New Testament. And before I begin today I want to expand on one question that was asked me and then correct myself on one of the others.

About two Sundays ago -- this is our fourth study those of you that have not had the preceding ones you can get tapes of them -- in the - about two times ago, three times ago [name redacted] asked a question, what do we say if someone says, “We don’t think that we ought to meet as the early church met?” And I tried to answer along this line, that we should acknowledge that the New Testament allows us freedom in our methodology. In other words, we may meet in different ways if we like but we should never meet in any way which violates a New Testament principle.

In other words, we have freedom but our freedom must not violate a principle which the early church believed in and practiced. And that is essentially the correct answer, I think, but I would like to say this, that I think that it is unwise for us to say that our doctrinal position is that we meet as the early church met and that we carry out all of the things that the early church carried out. For, some of the things that they practiced

were a matter of freedom. For example, if they greeted one another, Paul said, “Greet one another with an holy kiss.” Now we do not do that today, we shake hands. But we don’t violate any principle if we shake hands instead of greeting one another with a holy kiss.

But if, on the other hand, our meeting is conducted in such a way that a principle which the New Testament teaches is violated then we do not have freedom to violate the New Testament. Consequently if, for example, our meetings are conducted in such a way that the priesthood of every believer is and cannot be practiced by the way in which we meet then we must modify our meeting. If, for example, our meetings are conducted in such a way that the freedom for the ministry of spiritual gifts is quenched and Paul says, “Quench not the Spirit,” which means in the context, “Quench not the manifestation of the Spirit,” then we must modify our meeting in order that we do not violate that specific New Testament principle.

So it is incorrect to say we meet as the early church met but it is correct to say that we meet or try to meet -- I’m not sure we do, I hope we do -- but that we try to meet in a way that does not violate any principle that the early church believed and practiced. The second is a correction of an error, and [name redacted] very, very graciously came up and pointed this out to me. Is he here this morning?

[Comment from an audience member]

[Johnson] Oh, he is missing something. But anyway I was illustrating last time, you’ll remember, how a deacon was an assistant of an elder and that a deacon presumably might in time move from the office of deacon into elder. That there might be some things that prevented a man from being an elder but which did not prevent him from being a deacon. Now I was correct in so far as I went but I was doing this on the spur of the moment and then I used an illustration and of course it was an unfortunate

illustration. It's interesting [name redacted] is the only one that called it to my attention. I guess I ought to let well enough alone but I can't let this go on the tape, it's wrong.

I mentioned that an elder, for example, might be able to control his house very well, or should be able to control his house for the Scripture says that he should be one that, “Ruleth well his own house, having his children in subject with all gravity.” And then I said that perhaps a deacon did not measure up to this at the present time. Well of course, in the later part of the chapter when the deacon's qualifications are set forth one of them is, “Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.” So that is a qualification for both elder and deacon. And my illustration was not an illustration, it was error and so I want to take it back on the tape. I should have used an illustration such as this; that a deacon may be deacon and not necessarily apt to teach. The elder has to be apt to teach, be able to instruct anyone in the faith. Take anyone from outside the faith, into the faith, and build them up in the faith. Not necessarily, as we pointed out, a man who may stand before a large group of people and keep them interested in the Scriptures, generally speaking, but he should be apt to teach whereas a deacon, that qualification is not specified for a deacon. So it is possible for a man to qualify for the office of deacon, not qualify for the office of elder, but ultimately as he gains a knowledge of the Scriptures it's just possible that a deacon may pass from being a deacon into the office of elder since they are elder's assistants.

Now to come to the lesson today remember we have been considering the local church, its organization, its head is Jesus Christ, its offices up to this point are elders and deacons, its members are the congregation. Then we considered, secondly, the local church, its spiritual gifts and last time we looked at the question of spiritual gifts and we saw that every believer has a spiritual gift.

Now spiritual gifts as we examine the New Testament may be classified into two categories. There are those that are utterance gifts, for example: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor-teacher, which we pointed out was one gift, not two, pastor-teacher,

teachers or teaching which is referred to in 1st Corinthians chapter 12. In other words, a man might be a teacher, not necessarily a pastor-teacher. Every pastor is a teacher, but not every teacher is a pastor. I think experience bears that out. It's most important, however, that the word of God teaches it, so that we have gifts that are utterance gifts.

And then we have gifts that are non-utterance gifts. They're not less important, in the sight of God they're just as important. Just as important for the welfare of the local church but they are gifts such as ministry, helps, governments which you would normally think would belong to the office of elder, a ruling etcetera.

So the New Testament sets forth for us over twenty specific gifts. Now these are not talents. A talent is, for example, the ability to sing. [Name redacted] has the talent of singing, to marvelous degree but that's not a spiritual gift. Now she also has a spiritual gift because everybody has at least one spiritual gift. There is no reason why we should not have more than one. The Apostle Paul evidently was an apostle, a prophet, and a teacher. It may be that some of us are endowed in the sense that we only have one gift. Well that's very important in the sight of God. The man who has the utterance gift is not more important than the one who has the non-utterance gift. They're just as important, just as necessary.

Now today we want to consider the local church, its priesthood. And I know that you always look forward anxiously to my diagrams, they are so pretty, and so today I have something for you again. And I want you for our Scripture reading to turn with me to two or three passages, short ones. First of all, Hebrews chapter 13, verses 15 and 16, Hebrews 13:15 and 16.

Last Sunday morning as we went through spiritual gifts I was a little chagrin, as you probably gathered, that no one until the last minute asked the question after we said everybody has a spiritual gift, terribly exciting thing really to think about, I have a spiritual gift, and nobody asked the question, “How may I know it,” until the last moment, one

person. And I’ve forgotten, I believe it was [name redacted] again and I said he wasn’t planted in the audience.

Now I want you to know I was encouraged this week, we had someone over at the house on Thursday night, I think it was, and in the course of the discussion this person said, “I really am excited to know that I have a spiritual gift and I am anxious to find it out, find out what it is.” And that really should be the attitude of all of us, shouldn’t it. If we have a spiritual gift from God it is very, very important that we find out what it is and then exercise it to the glory of God and to the blessing of the local church.

Now today, however, priesthood, chapter 13, verses 15 and 16, and listen to the words in which we have priestly sacrifices referred to,

“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate, (that is to share,) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Now notice, the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to his name, doing good, and communicating. Sharing what you have for with such sacrifices these are sacrifices, priestly metaphor, sacrifices, God is well pleased. Now turn on a few pages to 1st Peter chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. 1st Peter chapter 2:4 and 5, now Peter says, speaking of Jesus Christ,

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

Now the important thing to notice here is not simply that we are a spiritual priesthood but notice that we collectively are a spiritual priesthood. He does not say, “Ye

also as living stones are built up spiritual priests,” but, “A spiritual house, an holy priesthood.” In other words, the priesthood is collective; notice that, that’s important.

Now will you turn on to the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation? You know, if we must learn the Scriptures we must learn to be accurate in our reading of them. We must never read them cursorily, we must pay attention to every word even the number, singular or plural, or words. Now Revelation chapter 1, verse 5 and 6. Now in the salutation John writes,

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, (now I have no question but that this is, as it is written in our English text, true to fact. That is, we are kings and we are priests. But if you have a Bible with a marginal note you will notice that the Greek text says, ‘And hath made us a kingdom.’ Again, this collective idea is stressed,) A kingdom, priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

In other words, collective priesthood is stressed by these passages that I have looked at. Now our subject today is the local church, its priesthood. Perhaps the greatest deterrent to scriptural practice in church life is indifference to which might be added ignorance. But that’s not the whole problem. Some is acceptance of custom for the scriptural.

I had a good friend at the Dallas Seminary; he went to be with the Lord not just a couple of years ago. He and I used to discuss these things quite freely because he could kid me and I could kid him and we didn’t mind it with each other. And I used to come in occasionally and speak to him and josh him a little bit about not following New Testament principles in his church activity. And one day I remember I asked him, I said,

“Well tell me just exactly, Jim, why it is that you believe in the church government that your church practices?” He said, “Well, to tell you the truth Lewis, I guess I believe in it because it’s that to which I am accustomed.” A few days later I was reading in something, I found a little stanza and I brought it in and I put it on his desk and waited to see what his reaction would be, and this was the stanza, ‘Custom, which all mankind to slavery brings, that dull excuse for doing stupid things.’ [Laughter] And when he saw that he began to laugh, and so did I. We had a real good time laughing together.

Tertullian once said a long time ago, “Custom without truth is error grown old.” “Custom without truth is error grown old.” And I’m afraid that in our local churches today we have reached a place in which we meet in accordance with custom and it is custom, frequently, without truth which is nothing more than error grown old.

I do believe that if the Apostle Paul were to come in our churches and if he were to announce that he was Paul we wouldn’t really have anything much for him to do except to invite him to teach a Sunday school class, or perhaps to hold a week or two of meetings. But he really would not have the opportunity to express himself as we are organized often as he should. And consequently it is important for us to get back to New Testament principles because when we do we discover that the church is much better able to function as an entity to the glory of God.

Now we’ve been making some important distinctions. Offices are spiritual positions, now I’m not sure I like this term positions as I’ve explained to you but nevertheless I think there’s another evidence for me to say it, positions. I rather think that these positions are more like functions than positions because as I pointed out to you the New Testament never uses the common Greek words for office for any of these offices. They had many beautiful words that expressed office in Greek but when the New Testament turns to office it never says the office of elder, it never says the office of deacon, it never says the office of priest. Oh you’ll find the word office in the English text but if you look it up you’ll find it’s not in the Greek text. In a few cases where you have,

“My office,” Paul even speaking about apostleship, he will say, “My office.” You will discover that it’s, “My service,” or, “My practice.” And even in cases such as oversight, “If anyone desires the office of bishop,” it’s really, “If anyone desires oversight,” not, “Office of bishop.” Not position in the sense of rank but we’re going to use it nevertheless.

Offices, spiritual positions, they have to do with oversight, and since today we’re going to look at priest and consider it an office for oversight and worship. Gifts, spiritual gifts, they are spiritual abilities which are for service in the local church. Graces: love, joy peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, the fruit of the spirit. Graces, they are the spiritual virtues for living. Now we must keep these three things separate in our minds; offices, gifts, graces. We’ve been trying to make this distinction.

The offices in the local church are elders who exercise oversight, deacons who are the assistants of the elders. The deacons are servants, they serve the elders, they serve the church. Now today priests, priests worship. In the Old Testament the priest exercised a position in Israel. In the New Testament we have priests so we’re considering that as office. Now if it’s true that some men are elders and some men are deacons and all of us are priest, it’s true to say every one of us is an officer in the local church, too. Gifts were divided into utterance gifts and non-utterance gifts and we’ve already spoken about them and graces; spiritual virtues for living.

Now today after we have pointed out offices, gifts, graces, we are introducing another important subject and that is priesthood. Biblically three offices exist in the church: elders who shepherd, guard, discipline; deacon, the elder’s assistant; and priest, and the priest’s work is to offer worship to God. Now remember our passage in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 15 and 16, among the things that the priest does is to give thanks to the name of the Lord. He offers the sacrifice of praise; I would consider them to be the same. He does good and communicates not [Laughter] - he does good and does not fail to communicate. That is, he does good and he shares, he shares what he has. And God says through the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, “With such sacrifices, God is well

pleased.” I think we could also add this, that the priest offers himself to God for Romans chapter 12, and verse 1 and verse 2, contains an appeal on the part of the apostle to the Roman Christians to, “Present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” So if we were to sum it up we would say that the priests are those who offer praise, praise and giving of thanks. They do good and share, and they also offer themselves. We’ll say more about that in a moment.

Now I’ve made some of these deductions but I want to be sure I haven’t missed any. If all of this is true, then, these deductions of are valid. Every believer is an officer in the local church if we call priesthood an office. All at least are priests. Now as you know this was a very important doctrine. As a matter of fact, this doctrine was one of the doctrines was responsible for the Protestant Reformation. It was Martin Luther who stressed the priesthood of every believer thinking, of course, of the priesthood of certain in the Roman Catholic Church who had certain rights and prerogatives according to their custom, their church teaching which in Luther’s day was simply error grown old. And one of the cardinal doctrines of the Protestant reformation was the priesthood of every believer.

Now every believer then has an office because everybody is a priest. Some, also, are elders and deacons as well, but everybody is a priest. Every believer has a spiritual gift, some of utterance, some of non-utterance. Now I put another little diagram on the board which I could not quite get on but these should have been right next to each other and I want to show you from the diagram the difference between ministry and worship.

Now worship is the work of the priest. A man who is a priest of God because he has believed in Jesus Christ becomes a member of the holy priesthood, which is the church, and out of his relationship of priesthood to God he offers praise, thanksgiving, shares what he has, gives, offers himself to God in worship. Now you’ll notice that I put the arrows vertically pointing heavenward, for worship is the overflow of the human heart directed toward God. In other words, it is this way, worship. Now on Sunday morning

when we come to meet we frequently read in our bulletin’s worship service. But instead of being worship, for the most part, it is a man addressing us from the word of God.

Now strictly speaking, that is ministry. Now I’m not denying that in some churches when a man preaches the response of the individual heart is gratitude to God in thanksgiving. My goodness, if you didn’t have ministry of the word that produced that it wouldn’t be worth much. I wouldn’t want to listen to it much. And I know that when the offering plates are passed Christians have an opportunity to give and that is worship. But you’ll have to grant that most of our services do not engage themselves primarily in that. Ministry, on the other hand, is the truth of God which comes from God through gifted men, utterance. Utterance gifted men to man, so that ministry is -- and notice the direction of the arrow -- ministry is from God-ward to man-ward. Worship is from men to God. They are the precise opposites. That is, by the way, why we call our morning service, it may not be ministry but nevertheless we call it the ministry of the word service, that’s why we do it. That’s why we do not call it worship, although worship may exist, I hope it does. I hope your attitude when we leave is worship, and praise, and thanksgiving. And I hope, also, you give a lot in the night meeting when you have an opportunity to give. But nevertheless, ministry and worship are different. They are precisely opposite.

Now very quickly I want to just trace priesthood in the Old Testament in the ministry of Jesus Christ and then bring it down to us specifically, what does it mean for us in Believers Chapel? Now as you know and as I’ve been saying in the exposition of the Epistle of the Hebrews, “Access to God is the aim of all spiritual service.” Every system of truth which has to do with ultimate things has its priesthood. For priesthood is essentially mediation. And if we have man on the one hand and God on the other we have to have mediation otherwise man and God are never brought together. The priest was the source of spiritual knowledge and he was the channel of the spiritual life and worship in Israel.

Priesthood springs out of the deepest need of the human heart. It springs out of the need for forgiveness of sins and out of the need for access in worship. There is something created within us by God that enables us to recognize that we are sinners and consequently we desire forgiveness. And since we are creatures of God there is also implanted within us by God, creaturehood which is never satisfied until we actually are in relationship with our creator and have access to him. Now that access and that forgiveness comes through priesthood.

In the Old Testament God gave Israel a giant sized object lesson, there was a great priesthood in Israel. At the head was Aaron, the high priest. The priests who performed the spiritual work of the tabernacle were the sons of Aaron. The high priesthood remained in the precise succession from Aaron. From Aaron to his son, to his son, to his son, but the family were the priests. So the Levitical family were priests, the Aaronic I should say, I guess.

Then the tribe of Levi engaged in all of the little secular duties. They carried the tabernacle; they did all of the temporal duties with priesthood. So we had Levites for the temporal duties, the sons of Aaron who were priests, and Aaron, the high priest. Now Aaron's duty, or the priesthood's duty, was to offer sacrifice and then to offer intercession on the basis of sacrifices and finally, to teach the law. In other words, on the priests lips there should be knowledge of the law. These were the duties of the priests.

Now the Old Testament, of course, was very limited because only certain ones were priests; only Aaron and his sons. If you had been a member of the tribe of Judah you could not have been a priest in Israel. In other words, the priestly service belonged to a select few; the high priesthood, an access into the holiest of all, to only one man once a year. Our Lord Jesus was not a priest in Israel, why? Because he was of the tribe of Judah, he was not of the right tribe. Consequently his priesthood was not an earthly priesthood. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews will argue that later on, we shall see it as we expound the book.

They had limited personnel, only certain ones priests, limited access, only Aaron once a year could go into the holiest of all, and limited validity for the priestly services never took away sins. Even the great day of atonement, repeated every year, which maintain the covenant between God and Israel, even the great day of atonement only gave them one more year of relationship to God. And every year as the day of atonement came around Israel was reminded anew of the fact their sins had never really been paid for.

So the Old Testament priesthood was a priesthood of shadow, looking forward to the substance in Jesus Christ. It was God's way of saying there is something to come that will fulfill and complete all of this. We can understand why Jesus spoke to the two disciples on the Emmaus road and said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written: Ought not the Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” If anybody ever went out of the way to teach people what was to come it was God through the Levitical system. The commandments taught men that they were sinners. The ceremonies taught men that there was remedy for their sin, and so grace filled the Levitical system. And if we ever teach the word of God as if to suggest that grace is not found in the Old Testament and I'm sitting in the audience you know what I'm thinking? You are the most ignorant expositor of the Scriptures that I have seen in a long time. I wouldn't say that, of course, but that's what I'm thinking because the Old Testament is full of grace.

But now coming to Jesus Christ, now this is all going to be expounded in Hebrews so I just want to make a couple of points. If I were to draw an organizational chart of the priesthood of Jesus Christ I would put one man on it because he stands unique. Jesus Christ was a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He was a divine priest, never had there been a divine priest until the time that Jesus came. But he had to be a divine priest because only a divine priest can bring us into relationship to divinity, to deity, to God. And so Jesus Christ is a divine priest.

By the way, it's rather striking that Jesus Christ is the only person in the New Testament who is called by the singular word priest in this economy in which we are living. Now I know Zechariah is called a priest but he's a priest in the Old Testament economy. In other words, in the economy in which we live, this age, only one person in the New Testament is called a priest, singular, Jesus Christ. We share in his priesthood. Now I think we are priests, don't misunderstand me, but I just want you to understand that the stress of the New Testament is upon the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

Now the function of priesthood in the case of our Lord was to offer the one sacrifice which removed sin and then to intercede on the basis of that one sacrifice, that's what he had done in his priestly work. He has died; he lives to make intercession for us. And out of his intercession also flows his advocacy which is part of his priestly activity.

Now in the case of the church, our priesthood, what are its outlines? Well our high priest is Jesus Christ. Will you turn to Hebrews chapter 3, and verse 1? “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” In other words, in the churches priesthood the high priest is Jesus Christ. He is our invisible high priest. Who are the priestly members in this priesthood? Well everybody in the church. In other words, he has made us all a kingdom, priests unto God as we read in Revelation chapter 1. Or as Peter says, “As we come to Jesus Christ we are made a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices to our God.” Jesus Christ is the high priest. We represent, every one of us born again, represent the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

What are our functions as priests? Well now we have two classes of functions. We have functions that are personal, individual, and we have functions that are collective. For you see, not only is the church as a whole a priesthood, but the local church also acts as a priesthood. Now the individual sacrifices that a priest offers to God are, first of all, we offer ourselves to God, as Romans chapter 12, verse 1 says. Let's just to make it easy to remember, we'll alliterate this. As a colored preacher said, “All my points are

alliterated.” [Laughter] First thing he does is offer himself to God, that’s the chief priestly sacrifice that you can perform individually, give yourself to the Lord. Then the next thing that we can do is offer praise, as Hebrews chapter 13 says. We offer the sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name. So we offer praise. And by the way, if we’re Christians our first responsibility is to offer ourselves to the Lord, but don’t neglect praise. Have you praised him today? Now we’ll say a word about that in a moment. Well have you? That’s part of your sacrifice. Have you forgotten your sacrifice today?

And then he says to do good and to communicate, don’t forget. Now it’s possible that to do good is separate or it’s possible that to do good is to communicate or to share. Well that means to share what we have. This is a great activity. Now all three of these sacrifices are well pleasing to God. You know I often attend Keswick Conferences and sometimes I speak at them, I’ll be speaking at one this summer in Los Angeles, and I listen to a lot of very interesting things that are said from the platform and I contribute my part too. And often the discussion in a Keswick Conference is on the great principles of the spiritual life. And occasionally you will notice in the audience who seem to be quite proud that they have reached this plateau of spiritual living. But occasionally some of the simplest things of the Christian are obviously not a part of their lives.

What I’m trying to get at is this; there are many very specific things in the word of God that please God. You don’t need a Kasich teacher to tell you what pleases God in many cases. One thing that pleases him is to give yourself to the Lord. Another thing that pleases him is just appraise him. If you really want to please God, praise him a little. And then if you want to please God, give a little. Give a lot, if you want to please him a lot. I have a friend who says, “I know lots of people who have been converted but their pocket books have never been converted.” But that’s priestly service, to give in praise.

Now collective ministry, or priestly service, now I had mentioned to you that in the New Testament the word priesthood is collective. And that in Revelation chapter 1 he speaks about a kingdom priests. In other words, in the New Testament the apostles

likened the local church to a priesthood and so we should have in our meetings certain sacrifices too. Now I want you to turn to 1st Corinthians chapter 14, and verse 26 for a moment, 1st Corinthians chapter 14, verse 26. When the early church came together they came together as a spiritual priesthood and so in verse 26 we read, “How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm,” that is, a hymn. Every one of you has a hymn of praise to render to God, every one of you has a teaching, a doctrine, every one of you hath a tongue,” tongues are temporary gifts. By the way, I have some friends who have suggested that since we have temporary gifts in 1st Corinthians chapter 14, perhaps the whole idea of meeting in this way was temporary. I always say, “Well will you notice verse 26? Every one of you have a teaching, has that been done away too?” The plain truth is that 1st Corinthians 14 has to do with both temporary and permanent gifts. “Hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.”

The early church met together and there was freedom of expression. That’s why Paul says, “Quench not the spirit. And so in the early church there was the offering of praise. There was the giving. Paul says in 1st Corinthians chapter 16 that they were to lay by them on the first day of the week. There might not be any like and so on.

Now I think it’s very difficult for a church to give itself to the Lord collectively. And I don’t know of any text that suggests that. However I think it would be a good idea. So priesthood then is both individual and collective. And one of the reasons that we meet, at least once during the week in such a way that everybody may participate is to give you an opportunity to exercise your priesthood as a believer in Christ. You can exercise your priesthood at home and in your personal life, that’s fine. I certainly hope you do that. But if you do not meet with the saints and contribute then you’re not exercising your collective priesthood as you should. And the local church itself should represent to God a priesthood, offering up praise and thanksgiving and worship.

Now we have just a moment or two and I had one or two other things that I wanted to say but I can save those and I'd rather give you a chance to ask a question. So does anyone have a question? Feel free, any question that pertains to this general subject, come on, don't waste the time.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Yes, well now personally [name redacted] I'm glad you asked that question because it is quite frequently stated that the worship service is the time when we break bread. The ministry of the word service is, say, in the morning. Or we may vary it when you have a meeting that really doesn't amount to anything. Now if you will study 1st Corinthians 12, 13, 14, or any of the passages that have to do with the church meetings you will discover that teaching was a very important part of the early church meetings. Exhortation was a very important part so personally I think it is actually incorrect to speak of the meeting in which the whole church comes together as the worship meeting. It's a meeting in which there may be worship but it's not entirely worship, for the gifts have to do with service and they may be utterance gifts as we pointed out. Priestly service, of course, is praise, and giving, thanksgiving, this type of thing. But everybody's a priest and some have utterance gifts and so the local church meeting should be, in my opinion, a meeting in which there is exhortation as the Spirit guided, teaching as the Spirit guided, doctrine, praise, thanksgiving. Now those who don't have gifts should not get up and teach us, only those who have gifts should teach. But the priests should feel free to take part and praise the Lord, pull out hymns, you know. And the gifted men should feel free to exercise their gifts. In other words, the meeting of the church was the meeting in which the whole activity of the church took place.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Ministry and worship, right. Ministry and worship. Any other questions? Yes.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Is there a difference between...

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Between what?

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Jerry -- I'm not sure I understand precisely what you mean.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] I see what you're getting at. Now to answer that, that's a good question, I'm repeating the question for the tape, should there be a special time in which we consider prayer needs as over against the regular meeting in which we engage in ministry and worship? Now I think that in the early church they had apparently one meeting in which all of these things were carried out. Consequently I do not think that it would be wrong for anyone to stand up in our meeting, providing they were male, and to pray fervently for the needs of the local church. I believe, Jerry [ph48:02], that those needs could be met in that meeting by prayer. I see nothing in the word of God, I think it would give a lot of variety to our own meeting, for example, which suffers in some ways for that very reason.

Now in looking at prayer meetings, I had not really intended to say anything about this so this is a good question, in looking at prayer meetings from the New

Testament standpoint you will be amazed to discover this, that there is in the New Testament no evidence whatsoever of a regular prayer meeting in the life of the local churches, no evidence whatsoever. When we first began Believers Chapel a number of the men gathered together, we had about twelve or fourteen of the men, some of them were seminary students, and we studied this week after week. This was one of the things that came up.

And it's surprising. Almost always the prayer meetings that are referred to in the New Testament were for specific needs that came before groups or the local church. So in the light of that we feel we have freedom here because there is no passage of Scripture that teaches you ought to have or you ought not to have a regular prayer meeting, mind you. We're just going by what we see. So we have followed the practice up to this time, we may change it if we feel free to do so, of calling prayer meetings when we have specific needs, maybe even calling a series of them. And so I think in a way I'm going to sit on the fence on your question. I think it's possible to have such a meeting. I don't think the New Testament teaches that you have to have it. I think at the same time that that type of need may be uttered right in our evening meeting. Times up, we'll have to stop. For next time will be the ordinances of the church.

Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the privilege of studying, and we pray that the things that we have...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]