

**PLEASE! Do NOT do it!** I know you are trying to get out from the non-Biblical Traditions that you grew up with. So am I. So please, think with me about our Shabbat times.

One of the biggest and most serious errors of the church is the division of the congregation into clergy and laity! This could be said as: leaders and followers, performers and spectators, paid professionals and paying customers, educated elite and ignorant commoners. This is not biblical! We must stop this thinking and stop any form of this practice. Church has become a business and follows the world.

Ancient Israel with its Levites and priesthood is not our model. The synagogue today is not our model. The synagogue in Yeshua's time is better but not our model. The apostolic meetings are our model, but the Bible says very little about how they functioned. We need to be careful NOT to take what "church fathers" said years later, as they were Greek philosophers following Greek and Roman culture! We need to construct our model from Scripture and some Hebrew culture (and be aware of our own cultures!) I believe that living-the-Bible-way can flourish in any culture of the world, provided the Believers clean up their culture from anything that violates the Bible. Israel today is a mosaic of many cultures, cleaned up by Torah.

1) It is the Body of Messiah that meets with its Head on Shabbat. Shabbat is an appointment with God; therefore, failure to meet with Him on Shabbat is an insult.

2) Each of our congregations is a small part of that Body, but the Head, Yeshua, is there with each group and must be recognized that He is there to lead.

3) The Body has many members, and all must function, each differently, or the Body is seriously handicapped. There is no room for spectators.

4) Shabbat is a 24-hour period, part for the individual, part for the family, part for the Body. For how many hours should the Body meet together? When should they start and when finish? Each local body will decide for themselves.

5) The focus or content of the meeting is the Word of God, not the words of a preacher as in church. The passages are known ahead of time. Every member should have read them

during the week. At the meeting, they should be read, explained, discussed by the Body, and practical applications made.

6) Members do not depend on one member to do all the explaining. This can degenerate into "clergy thinking," depending on an "educated elite." We have Yeshivas, yes, but they should be for everyone! Academic learning alone does not make a godly leader! God chooses whom He will and He adds His own training.

7) Since there are songs in the Bible, we will also do some singing. Why? To take up time? To get people "in the mood" or manipulate emotions? NO! Will we call this our "worship time"? NO! It is our singing time, to Rejoice and Praise the LORD! Worship is our **Lifestyle**, and singing is a small part. Worship is Love in action, keeping His Commandments daily! We enjoy music and appreciate musicians but please, do not call them a "worship team"!

8) Since there are prayers in the Bible, we will also do some praying. Will this be a "pastoral prayer"? NO! Again, this is "clergy thinking." Any Believer can lead in prayer; there might be several as well as silent prayer.

9) Since there is witnessing in the Bible, shall we "give an invitation to accept the Messiah"? NO! The Shabbat meeting is for the building up of the Body. Each member of the Body witnesses all week long, and should be alert and able to help not-yet-believers come to understand Scripture. It is the Spirit that convicts and "gives the invitation" to repent and respond.

10) Since "reports" are given in the Bible, we shall have time for testimonies and prayer requests. Every meeting is orderly, someone is in charge, and everyone seeks to glorify Yeshua as He is there with you, to be blessed by Him, and to learn as much as possible. There are no "Diotrephes" allowed.

These are my "10 suggestions" to think about. You may have more. Good! Let's revamp our times to be "Body Life with Yeshua," not "stuck in the rut" of doing "church on Saturday." Sad to say, we have found many Messianic congregations doing "church on Saturday," including in Israel (subsidized by foreign churches!) It is hard to break Tradition, but let's be determined to "do it right, the biblical way!" We want to see that "community" devel-

# Church on Saturday?

By Roger Walkwitz

ops among us, as we truly are "family." We come together, not to see a program, but to spend time together with Yeshua in various activities,

Sometimes we say that the first "Bible Conference" was in Acts 2. It lasted for many weeks, longer than God intended. We are not told if they did anything different on Shabbat. However, there are also "Bible Conferences" in the Tanakh! A really good one is in Nehemiah chapter 8. It was Sukkot. The main activities were listening to the reading of the Torah with an explanation, and eating, sharing food with others!

Those who "think church" will read into the Scripture the Traditions that they have been doing. Those of us who "think Jewish, think like they thought when the passage was written" will conclude the following from Acts 2:42-47:

1) The main reason for the Bible Conference was to learn all they could from the Apostles, those who had been with Yeshua since His baptism. All teaching was from the Tanakh, as it "came alive" by the Spirit, like when Yeshua taught the two on the road to Emmaus. They began to really "see" Yeshua in the Torah, in the Prophets, and in the Writings. There was no Newer Testament. Some attending were believing priests and Pharisees, who now got some of their "theology" straightened out, but not all of it. Acts 15 comes later to make more corrections.

2) Those from the Diaspora ran out of money, so others donated to help out. Why was money needed? There were more than 3000 mouths to be fed every day. There may have been some housing rentals to be paid. Transportation was by foot, to meetings and meals in homes, so no expense there. The coordination of such a large group of people went smoothly because they all worked together. This is "koinonia," the "joint participation," wrongly translated "fellowship."

3) Those who "think church" will conclude that the 3000+ had the "Lord's Supper" every day. Those of us who "think Jewish" know that there is no "Lord's Supper" in the Bible, regardless of how translations are worded. "Breaking bread" has always been the expression for eating a regular meal. 2:46b reads, "and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their meals with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart."

4) "and to the prayers" is the last of the four specific activities. The use of "the" prayers indicates specific prayers, probably indicating that a form of the Siddur was in use at that

time, using many of the prayers recorded in the Bible that they had memorized. However, God always appreciates spontaneous prayers, prayers from the heart! Repetition is sometimes good, but sometimes numbing. We should be flexible, as Yeshua leads each group by His Spirit, with all participating.

In all things, be careful to avoid any form of "clergy – laity" division by the use of titles (Rabbi, Father, Leader, etc Mt 23:8-10) as we are all brethren, servants of The Messiah and to each other, a healthy, fully-functioning body, a community. Especially avoid using such titles as "reverend"! Psalm 111:9b says, "holy and reverend is **His** name." An old retired missionary called my attention to this the evening I was ordained. Even Spurgeon in his commentary on Psalm 111 says the use of this title should be stopped; who are we to be revered? My name is "Roger." Those who call me by my name get my attention.

Of course each group will have designated leadership. God does not condone confusion. We do well to avoid political hierarchies. Yeshua said to follow His example; "For the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve – and to give His life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45.