

What Does This Gospel Meeting Mean to You?

Each of us should have already asked ourselves the question, What does this gospel meeting mean to *me*? Will I receive benefit from attending each service or is my time better spent elsewhere? Will my faith and my relationship with the Lord be strengthened or will teaching from the revealed and inspired word of God have no effect on me? Do I already have all the knowledge of the Bible that I need to be pleasing to Him, or could I possibly learn or be reminded of a spiritual principle that could make a difference in my eternal salvation? Could I help and encourage others by attending the meetings or would my presence have no value to anyone? These are serious questions we all need to ask ourselves, even though we know the answers if we tell ourselves the truth.

This series of lessons from the Bible has two purposes, the same two goals that every effort made to teach and preach the word in the New Testament has.

First, to evangelize, to proclaim the gospel to lost people. Paul writes, "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:14-17).

The second purpose or goal is to edify, to exhort and build up members to greater knowledge and service. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

If the gospel meeting this week means something to us, it will cause us to act in certain ways.

1) Pray. Hopefully, we have been praying daily for this meeting in our private prayers at home. Now we need to continue to pray for our speakers; for our visitors and invitees to have open hearts as they hear the word of God preached; for any weak members who need strength; and for members who have left their service to the Lord, that they would penitently return to Him.

2) Prepare. Yes, I know the meeting starts today, but there are still some preparations we can make to help our collective efforts to save souls. Continue to invite family, friends, and neighbors to the services. Encourage other members who may not normally attend nightly services of our meetings to be there this time. Be present early to meet and greet our visitors, and so you do not disturb the services once they have begun. Make all visitors feel warmly welcome. They are souls!

3) Be present. Clear your calendar now so that you can attend every service. When you invite a visitor, nothing makes a worse impression on them than if you stay home on the night he/she attends. *In a gospel meeting, your presence is always edifying, while your absence is always demoralizing.* Empty seats truly have an effect on all who attend — affecting the morale of the members and the impact of the message on visitors. Let us determine today to be present at every service.

4) Participate. Remember, you are coming to worship the God of heaven! Again, arrive early to welcome visitors and invite them to come back after the service. Sing every song in a spirited, enthusiastic manner with grace in your heart. Reverently give attention to the prayers being offered, and say amen at the closing if you want to. Give close attention to the lesson and turn in your Bible to read the verses cited. Let members and visitors know you are truly interested in hearing and learning God's word.

This meeting is going to be a wonderful spiritual time for many. It will be extremely beneficial to those who truly want to grow from these nights of studying God's word together. Don't you want to be one of those? You and I will be stronger, more knowledgeable, and better serving Christians if we pray for the events of the week, prepare for each night, be present for every meeting, and participate in the worship services.

- by Danny Johnson

Gospel Meetings

We have heard from some brethren who feel that gospel meetings are no longer useful. They argue that such meetings are a waste of effort, time, and money.

On what basis do they make this judgment? Usually they argue that we are not seeing any results. They are quick to point out the great successes of gospel meetings held 50 years ago and more. Back then it was not uncommon to see dozens obey the gospel. Some meetings had such great results that they would be "protracted" (continued on week after week). Nearly everyone in a community would come out to hear the gospel preached.

How will we answer these modern day critics of gospel meetings? Well, we could claim that there are some "visible" results, and cite cases where a few have responded to the invitation during gospel meetings. But, for every case where we could show a response, they could produce a dozen or more cases where no response was made. We think this approach is quite futile.

Actually, what we need to do is stop emphasizing the so-called "visible" results so much. Yes, we'd love to see a return to the former days when huge crowds gathered to hear the gospel preached, and when scores of people obeyed the gospel. But reality says that those days probably are gone forever. There are too many worldly things attracting the attention of the majority of people. Regardless though, we need to have Paul's attitude: "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:18). When that is the standard, gospel meetings cannot fail to be successful!