

This Thing We Call Church

Have you ever given any thought to where the current way we “do church” originated? Is there something God ordained about maintaining the same format for church services every Sabbath? Is it hidden in one of Paul’s or Timothy’s or one of the other apostle’s writings? Did Jesus utter the words I will build my church and it shall consist of three opening songs, an opening prayer, followed by a sermonette, another song, a main sermon, one to three more closing songs, and a closing prayer, every Sabbath, week after week, year after year? Can’t find it? Is it possible the translators left it out?

Of course this is silly talk. Jesus, nor His disciples, nor the early church ordained any particular format for worship. You can look but you won’t find it.

What Jesus did say very clearly is “by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” When the church comes together, regardless of what form it takes, how it is done, the common ingredient was to be that love would be evident. Relationship would be part of the mix.

It makes sense doesn’t it? What is church for? Why do we meet together each week? It’s about hearing God’s word yes. But we could do that on our own couldn’t we? Isn’t it primarily about sharing God’s love with each other? Isn’t that the core? We share how he’s changing us. We come together to encourage one another in the faith, in His love for us. We lift one another up and support each other. Isn’t relationship, loving relationship, what this is all about?

Unfortunately in many of our churches today we have substituted the real loving relationships God desires to build among us for something entirely different. Religious form, the trappings of church organization, the maintaining of church culture and traditions and structure are substituted for real sharing, for real relationship, for real growing in relationship together.

At New Horizon Community Fellowship, we believe in a return to the heart of worship as practiced by those earliest of Christians.

Their focus was not on building an institution but on building relationship, with God and with one another, nourished and sustained by the Holy Spirit. We’re told in Acts that they came often together. It doesn’t seem there was a written liturgy or even a prescribed format to those early meetings. We read, rather, that sometimes they came together to sing praises and to pray, sometimes they came together to hear a teacher expound God’s Word, sometimes each of them took turns sharing, decently and in order, what the Holy Spirit had put on their hearts. Still other times we read they just came together to share in the breaking of bread and fellowship. Whatever the form their worship took, it seems they were less institutional in nature than organic. Why? Because when relationships are front and center, things like growth, organization, and ministry take care of themselves. They occur naturally, organically. In such an environment the “format” of how they did church changed, adapted, to fit the naturally changing needs of the body as it grew and developed.

Jesus said they would know you are my disciples if you love one another. This new church thrived because this love shined out in the midst of a world of religious institutionalism, obligation, duty. It

stood out in the midst of a religious system that existed primarily to serve and sustain itself through guilt fear, sacrifice, tithes and offerings. God's love, poured out in the hearts of His people, bonding them to Him and to each other, expressing itself in selfless acts of service and worship, could not be missed by a world in bondage.

That is the kind of environment we seek to sustain here at New Horizon. We are a fellowship of believers, a family of Christians, doing and loving this life together. Our services are varied. Sometimes we meet to pray together, sometimes we meet to share and discuss, sometimes we meet to listen to God's Word being taught, and sometimes we just meet to fellowship and share a meal. Our goal is to grow together and share this journey in Christ, not grow an institution. You're welcome to join us in that journey.