

Why Some Meetings Succeed And Others Fail

Introduction. Gospel meetings can be a useful tool in the work of the local church. The purpose of gospel meetings is normally twofold. The first is evangelism which provides an opportunity to invite others to hear the gospel (John 1:40-42). The second is edification which builds up Christians through the teaching of God's word (Colossians 1:28).

Not all gospel meetings appear to have the same effect. Some are successful in sowing the seed and building up the members, while others are failures, discouraging those who attend rather than uplifting them. Why the difference? Who do some succeed and others fail? The most likely cause is that the difference is found in the attitudes of the members of the congregation hosting the meeting.

I. ***Enthusiasm Leads To Success***

A. Enthusiastic preaching.

1. Presented by the guest preacher(s).
 - a) Lessons designed to stir the heart (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 8-9).
 - b) Sermons presented by a preacher on fire for the Lord (Jeremiah 15:16; 20:9).
2. Listened to by a receptive audience.
 - a) Who receive the word with all readiness (Acts 2:41; 17:11).
 - b) Whose attentiveness inspires the preacher in his efforts.
 - (1) Rarely is there a problem with the preacher being on fire.
 - (2) Yet the audience can have an impact on the preacher's zeal!

B. Enthusiastic worship.

1. Congregational singing that uplifts and inspires (Colossians 3:16).
 - a) Led by enthusiastic and talented song leaders.
 - b) Joined in by joyful participants.
2. Prayers offered that bless those who hear (Philippians 1:9-11; Hebrews 4:14-16).
 - a) Often expressed by visiting preachers or elders.
 - b) Drawing us near to God and preparing us to receive the word.

C. Enthusiastic attendance.

1. Attendance by the regular members.
 - a) Coming to every service of the meeting (Matthew 5:1; 8:1; 13:2).
 - b) Arriving early, and showing that they are glad to be present.
2. Attendance by the visitors.
 - a) Brethren from congregations in the area.
 - (1) Who support our efforts by their presence.
 - (2) Who contribute to the occasion by their singing and prayer.
 - b) Visitors from the community.

- (1) Who have accepted the invitation to come.
- (2) Whose presence indicates spiritual interest.
 - (a) It is not uncommon for visitors to outnumber members.
 - (b) If all the local members are present, the building will likely be full!

D. Enthusiastic welcome.

- 1. Extended before the service begins.
 - a) By members who arrive early, ready to greet and welcome the visitors (James 2:1-4).
 - b) By members who leave places for the visitors.
- 2. Extended after the service is over.
 - a) By members who remain and talk to the visitors, letting them see your joy to be here (cf. Acts 8:39; Romans 15:10-13).
 - b) By members who show hospitality by inviting visitors into their homes or to a restaurant. Added to the efforts of the guest preacher(s), this interaction between members and visitors enhances the edification of the gospel meeting!
- 3. Even if a single soul does not respond to the gospel invitation, a gospel meeting is a success when the word of God has been proclaimed and saints have been edified. Yet sometimes, a gospel meeting fails to rise to the occasion despite the faithful efforts of a good preacher. A major reason for failure can be summarized in one word: Apathy.

II. ***Apathy Leads To Failure***

A. Apathy toward the word.

- 1. Manifested by indifference toward the gospel meeting.
- 2. Observable by poor attendance by the members of the congregation (Isaiah 6:9-10).
- 3. Noticed by visitors from other congregations and the community. Does our absence not say something about our reverence for the word of God? It shows to other Christians your interest or lack thereof.

B. Apathy toward praising God.

- 1. Evident in late arrivals that disrupt the service in progress.
- 2. Expressed in song and prayer that lacks zeal and fervor of spirit (Romans 12:11; Colossians 4:12-13). Does the praise of God not deserve the same common courtesy we show our other appointments? How much diligence do you show getting to the doctor or the ballgame? You strive for what you love!

C. Apathy toward brethren.

- 1. Visible by our absence and empty seats.

2. Apparently our concern for one another is not sufficient to make the effort necessary to attend. Does your absence show an indifference about the growth and well-being of the church? How badly do you want us to fulfill our mission?

D. Apathy toward visitors.

1. Shown by failing to welcome them (Acts 10:48; 14:27-28; 16:15).
2. Conveyed by our quick departure after the services. Can we expect visitors to take our message seriously when we fail to take their presence seriously?

Conclusion. As with any service rendered to God, success or failure is affected by attitude (Proverbs 23:7). Enthusiasm increases the likelihood of success. Apathy guarantees failure.

Diligence and fervor are essential in our service to the Lord. Luke-warmness is abominable to the Lord (Zephaniah 1:12; Haggai 1:4-5). As you plan your involvement in our gospel meeting, what will your attitude be? The success or failure of gospel meetings rests heavily upon our attitude, and so does our eternal well-being!