On Congregation

The understanding associated with “congregation” is that all believers are part of the Family of God, and we are siblings together. In a Biblically healthy, well-balanced congregation, the members are more closely tied to each other than to the world. Members of the congregation are considered equal to their own family (or even closer, especially when the family members are unsaved). There is a high degree of mutual trust and a strong desire to help each other. The Biblical mandate to edify each other (1 Corinthians 10:23) and to stimulate each other to love and good deeds, encouraging each other in the Lord (Hebrews 10:19-25) is the fruit of this Christ-like relationship. It is common for us to refer to each other as “brethren” or brothers and sisters in Christ – and to mean it.

As in every family, there are the occasional squabbles, but there is also the willingness to forgive, make up, and continue to build a stronger relationship. There is the willingness to work closely with each other for a common goal, especially in discipleship and the building of the Body of Christ. There is loving concern for each other as we each struggle through life's circumstances. This mutual love is expressed in both word and deed.

Congregation or Family of God is a higher form of relationship than friendship. However, if the connectiveness to Christ is not well established in being a branch and a friend of Christ, the congregation relationship becomes mere legalistic religion. The relationship with Christ must be more firmly established than the relationship to each other. This is not usually the case in a specific congregation because there are people of differing spiritual maturity. In the spiritually healthy, well-balanced congregation, those who are mature are naturally functioning to help all others to grow in their faith and relationship with Christ (as in Ephesians 6:1). If we look at the letters to the Church in Revelation 2 and 3, we can see how congregations can become unhealthy. If we look at those letters, we can see how we must know Christ and the attitudes that must be perfected to maintain that perfect functioning in accordance with the plan of God.

We must know Christ as:

1. The One who holds us in His hand and who is our Lord.
2. The Resurrection and the Life – in fact, the provision of all things, including life, purpose, and satisfaction.
3. The Judge, and the One who defines right and wrong.
4. The Son of God, God Incarnate, who knows all things, including the heart of each of us, and who is The Righteous One.
5. The Head of the Body of Christ, without whom we can do nothing.
6. He who is Holy and True and in sovereign control over all things (and the One who has given the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20).
7. The Creator and the Faithful and True Witness of God. The Author and perfecter of our faith. Our Savior.

The attitudes we must perfect in our daily life include:

1. He is our First (or primary) Love.
2. He is our Savior and the only source of eternal life.
3. He is our provider.
4. His Word is/has the absolute authority over us.
5. He is our protector and our righteousness.
6. He is the one we need to please. If we please Him, He will give us acceptance among men. He is the one who counts us as worthy, and His value upon our lives is what counts.
7. He is the One who disciplines us because of His great love for us. We need to accept His discipline with joy and act in a way that gives Him all glory and honor.

In this relationship with Christ, our focus is worship, manifested through obedience to His word and giving glory to Him through both our words and deeds. We desire to fellowship with Him and commune with Him on a moment-by-moment basis. We recognize the surpassing richness of His love; we are the ones whom He has loved.