

CHAPTER 5

A Fellowship of Love

In the rough and tumble of life, we need to have a centre of the support of a loving, caring group. Some people have been led to join covenant communities — others have small praying within larger churches, While Marj and I have been blessed by the different people who at one time or another, have shared with us in the prayer meeting which has met regularly in our home for the past ten years. This meeting was originally started by Fr. Richard Loherlin and myself for the team praying with individuals after the Friday night meetings at Eustace Street to prepare for this ministry. It became a regular home Charismatic meeting. While it is a commitment to have a meeting in one's home, it has been worth it.

Looking back over the years, we rejoice in all the people who have come stayed for a season, then gone on with the Lord to share and receive in other places. People would sometimes come and sit quietly for weeks or months then suddenly blossom forth and go out to witness to the glory of God perhaps before thousands. Others have come maybe only once and had their lives turned inside out when they met Jesus We have had sad times when someone has a sorrow or difficulty, but usually there is someone else with a story of thanksgiving to God.

One of the most valuable aspects of the prayer meeting is for our children. They can see that other people share the faith of their parents. They can hear and see some of the good things the Lord is doing. Children love to be a 'part' and to share in song and Bible reading and know they are accepted in the same way as the older people.

The prayer meeting is more than just the 'meeting'. It is the outcome of the lives of those who gather. It is very much affected by ones individual relationship with God, time spent reading and

meditating on Scripture, ones obedience to God and openness to see what he is doing moment to moment. It is also important that the prayer should be preceded by a time of prayer by the leaders and that leaders and anyone else who knows the Lord Jesus, should come to the meeting **in the presence and victory of the Lord** and have an open ear to what the Lord really wants to do. (I remember in the expanding days of the prayer meeting at Eustace Street, how the group of leaders used to meet for about an hour of prayer beforehand. Very often, the theme of the meeting was revealed to them and afterwards confirmed by people who had not been at the pre-meeting). It is important that at the pre-meeting the freedom of God's Spirit to work and the binding of anything that would hinder God's Word, is proclaimed. (See Matt. 18v18-20)

We have found just as the psalmist did (Psalm 100) that to....

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord

Come into His presence with singing

Enter His gates with thanksgiving

And His courts with praise

Give thanks to Him, bless His name....

... is a good way to start a meeting. Praising God enables the problems and complexities of daily life to be put in proper perspective in our minds as we are taken up in the wonder of what God has done and the realisation of what He can do. Interspersed with the songs of praise, there is a place for testimonials of thanksgiving for what the Lord has done in the past week in our lives. Loud praise often gives way to quieter more worshipful songs which in turn can be followed by singing in the Spirit. "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything, giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." (Eph. 5v18-20 & 1 Cor. 14v15-26) A deep silence where God's presence is felt, often follows singing in the Spirit and there often comes forth a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom etc, that the Lord has laid on someone present to

share. (If the leader feels that the word shared is important they may have to hold the meeting back to give time for meditation on what has been shared because frequently someone with less experience will ask for a song to be sung before there is time for the word to sink in.

It is important that there is "Spiritual Food" given during the meeting. A positive teaching from Scripture for example. It is not important that the meeting be kept on a 'theme' as the natural man and mind may prefer, but God's Spirit may want to say different things to different people and sticking to a 'theme' can hinder this.

There are many similarities between Charismatic prayer meetings and the Quaker meetings in which Marj and I grew up. The major difference is the Quaker meeting has no group singing and is based on silent waiting on God. Over the years, Quakers have developed a set of 'Advices' and 'Queries' to help with this type of meeting. Many of them are relevant to the Charismatic meetings and are available — see note¹.

Near the end of a meeting, it often seems right to have a time of prayer for the country, (1 Tim. 2v1-4) for individuals and friends and to complete the meeting with a time of praise and the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray. We give God the glory for all He has done.

The above outline is not a written formula for a successful prayer meeting. "The written code kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor. 3v6)
Responsiveness to God's Spirit is the only formula for satisfaction.

Just for interest, over the years, only once has no one turned up to the meeting in our home and never has there been more than twenty five. While the home meeting lacks the excitement of a large meeting, it is in many ways more satisfying, for looking back, one knows the people who have been helped, the prayers that have been answered. And one's heart is filled with gratitude and praise. It has been an open meeting. We have not tried to build a group, but rather to be available to any who wish to join us in worship, to be strengthened in the Lord.

¹ Christian Experience of Religious Society of Friends in Ireland. Queries and advices on Ministry and Oversight. Also at end of Quaker Life and Practice published 2012 Religious Society of Friends Quaker House Stocking Lane Rathfarnham Dublin 16

People are free to move on as the Lord may lead them to learn more and share in other groups. We have probably been blessed more than anyone and all the precious people we have known and shared with and who have shared with us, we say; "WE LOVE YOU" Thank you, Jesus.