

Spiritually, only those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord are part of the universal church with the capital „C“. What is decisive is not membership in any organization, nor regular participation in religious services, but only belonging to Jesus: *He who has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.* (1 John 5:12) That seems clear to me. At the same time, I was very intrigued that the local churches in the New Testament are incredibly open to unbelieving people from outside!

The Master himself started it! He served the disciples especially among sinful people! He taught them many things in the presence of multitudes! Only on rare occasions did he take the disciples into private place to rest a little.

Have you ever thought that whoever wanted to become a disciple of Jesus could hear and see the absolute majority of the things from the Master! That is why we see not only the twelve disciples chosen by name, but also seventy (Luke 10) and even a multitude of disciples. (Luke 19:37)

The Lord Jesus served all circles of his disciples in the midst of clearly bad people. That is why he was called by his opponents a friend of sinners and thieves. (Matthew 11:19) The Lord Jesus goes to people and actively connects with them where ever they are. At the same time, he almost always has disciples around him! Not long before the end of his ministry, the Lord Jesus prays for his disciples: John 17:15 *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the Evil One.*

Similarly, the apostle Paul is continuously surrounded by a mixture of believers and unbelievers! And the unbelievers bring their inputs and sometimes attacks into Paul's speeches! In Ephesus it was so bad that Paul *separated the disciples and took refuge with them in the school of a man named Tyrannos* (Acts 19,9-10). And what was the result of separating the disciples by Paul? *Within two years, all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord!* These disciples are not only smarter when Paul invested in them, but above all they are excellently equipped to minister to unbelievers! They immediately go and massively win more disciples for Jesus, so that: *all the inhabitants of the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord within two years!*

I emphasize that Church is a spiritual community. However, if people who do not yet live with Jesus are not a regular part of the lives of individual disciples and also of the regular activities of the church, then such a church is missing something very important! Compared

to the biblical model, such church seems sterile to me – barren, sick...

Following the example of the Lord Jesus and of the apostle Paul, we strive to create communities of believers who spiritually belong to the invisible church of Jesus, and at the same time physically and mentally live in this world in effective connection with non-believers!

In this sense, Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 are an exclamation mark for us: *If the whole church is gathered together and everyone speaks in tongues, and simple people or unbelievers come in, will they not say you are crazy? 24 But if all prophesy, and someone unbelieving or ignorant comes in, he will be condemned by all and judged by all. 25 The hidden things of his heart will be revealed, and so he will fall on his face, worship God and confess: Indeed, God is among you!*

Am I reading this correctly? When the church meets, believers are to adapt their spiritual expressions to the present unbelievers! And what is the result when the church service „gives in“ to unbelievers in this way? *The unbeliever falls on his face, bows down to God and confesses: Indeed, God is among you!* (1 Corinthians 14:25)

Let me summarize the practical points from this biblical observation:

1. The meeting of believers should be such that **non-believers would want to come** and get to know the deep and free life of Jesus' disciples!
2. According to Paul, the key here is to be **understood**! He directly tells them not to speak unintelligibly. That's why we're breaking down our Christian jargon by all means available!
3. Both the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul worked with the disciples directly **in a secular environment**! (Only when the attacks of the unbelievers were really bad did they get a little more private with them!) The first church at Pentecost was meeting – I would say – in the „marketplace“ called the Jerusalem Temple! After all, cattle and pigeons were sold there and they even had a currency exchange there! According to this model, some of our disciples tried a meeting of God's family in the dining area in a shopping park: Five or six friends around a larger table with several Bibles on it. Everyone has some drink or food and the standard three-thirds meeting of the little church is going on. A non-believing friend walks by: „What are you doing here?!“ he



says to one of the people present. „We read the Bible, it’s really cool! Come take a look! I’m sure you’ll like it too!” A friend comes in, listens, joins the discovery, and is completely surprised. He wouldn’t express it like that, but in a way he experienced:

4. **„Indeed, God is among you!”**

*Lord Jesus, your example and the example of your followers keeps moving me and inspire me immensely...*