

Spiritual Development of Congregations



The Bible gives very little information about the structures of congregations. It does give very clear pictures of what we are to be as the “people of God” and of how we are to relate to God. The following list, from New Testament letters to churches, is representative (though not exhaustive) of the qualities expected of congregations. If spiritual development is appropriate for congregations, and if growth in spirituality is part of the learning process in a congregation, how is it nurtured? Further, how might *institutional* factors hinder or facilitate the formation of these qualities in congregations? *Linda Cannell*

From the New Testament Letters

The Exercise: Read through the New Testament Epistles and jot down every word and phrase that describes the writers' admonitions to the churches. What is expected of the congregations, the people of God, in the New Testament era? A representative list follows.

FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION, MERCY
HOSPITALITY, GENEROSITY, HONESTY
AS OPPORTUNITY PERMITS, DO GOOD TO ALL PEOPLE
BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS
CARRY YOUR OWN LOAD, DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO SOMEBODY ELSE
FAITH, HOPE, JOY, LOVE, PEACE, KINDNESS
GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, SELF-CONTROL
TRUST, BELIEF, HUMILITY
PATIENCE, MODERATION, CONTENTMENT
THANKFULNESS, GRATITUDE
SELF-DISCIPLINE
HONOR ONE ANOTHER, SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER
AFFIRM THE GIFTS OF OTHERS
HOLINESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS
WORSHIP OF GOD
AFFIRM THE GOSPEL
PRAY TOGETHER FAITHFULLY
VALUE THE WORD OF GOD, OBEDIENCE TO GOD
LIVE IN PEACE WITH OTHERS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE
BUILD BRIDGES TO OTHERS
PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY
FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS
ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER
FREEDOM FROM PREJUDICE
RESIST/AVOID THAT WHICH IS EVIL