

Daily Devotional, May 15, 2020 Good Opportunities For Community

“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.” Acts 8:1,4 (NIV)

I'm not going to lie, I'm pretty disappointed that our normal church activities have had to be altered. I look forward to Sunday mornings when we will be able to worship together again every week. I love spending time with all of you, and when the opportunities arrive, to teach God's Word. I enjoy the fellowship opportunities that we enjoy both in and out of our church building. So, as we have had to change the way we do "church," it saddens me to know that we will continue to be missing so much valuable time that we normally have and need together.

But, the more I think about this strange and unique time we're living in, it doesn't have to be all doom and gloom. Although these circumstances will put a strain on our church gatherings and fellowship, I believe it also presents some exciting opportunities for us to grow in our relationships with Jesus. We may not be meeting in our normal places with everyone present, but I want to encourage staying engaged with God's Word and each other in whatever form that takes. Obviously, families have had a chance to slow down and spend more time at home together. Hopefully, this has led to more time for spiritual conversations and family devotions. During this time, we will continue to have to make extra efforts to follow Jesus and be with His people. If we lean in together, this could be a time of great spiritual awakening in our church and community.

This is exactly what happened in Acts 8. God's people were scattered because of looming persecution. Persecution and suffering are never good things, but God is too good to let bad things destroy God's people and God's plans for them. The church was most certainly anxious and fearful during these times. No doubt, many of them were separated from friends and family that they loved. God used the scattering of his people for the furthering of the gospel. Right after the early church is scattered into the surrounding areas, people from those regions began to hear about Jesus. People began to call on Jesus as Lord. These were people that might never have heard about Jesus if these followers had not been scattered by this persecution. God used a strange and difficult time for God's glory and the good of God's people.

Over the coming weeks we will definitely be bored, and we will likely be frustrated by the interruptions to our church gatherings and fellowship, but we can resolve to use this time to grow closer to Christ and His church. One way we can do that as a congregation is by reading the Bible together. On Wednesday nights on alternating weeks, the Pub Chat group has been studying the book of Acts together. It's not too late to join in. Contact Ann through our church email to receive a Zoom invite. Watch your church emails for further study opportunities. Here are just a few more:

On Sunday mornings, Ben has been leading our youth in Bible discussion topics. I encourage our youth to accept his Zoom invitations and join in with the other young people of our congregation. Stop sleeping in! In fact, invite a friend! Also, if you haven't been a part of his Wednesday Scavenger Hunts, you're not only missing out on a great chance to have your detective skills challenged, but to also have some fun and some great discussion later that evening.

Kate has been sending out some really awesome Sunday School videos and materials that families can work on together. I encourage families to check these out during your personal time together.

Next Thursday evening Tom Clark will re-engage with the Men of Hope by starting the Men's Bible study up again through Zoom. Contact Tom if you would like to be added to the Zoom gathering.

My prayer for these coming weeks is that God would move in our hearts to make us intentionally pursue communion with him and his people like never before. May God use these strange times to do a powerful work in our family ministry and our church! ***Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Amen.***