

Daily Devotional, June 4, 2020 Some Assembly Required

Acts 2:41-47 (NIV) ⁴¹ *Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.* ⁴² *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* ⁴³ *Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *All the believers were together and had everything in common.* ⁴⁵ *They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.* ⁴⁶ *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,* ⁴⁷ *praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Togetherness was essential to the early Christian church. The book of Acts uses the word "together" 32 times. The word "assemble" or some spinoff of that word is used in 7 places. In **Hebrews 10:25** believers are encouraged to not give up meeting or assembling together.

Togetherness is an important aspect of the church. This togetherness or fellowship is God's plan for the church. The beloved disciple, John, wrote persuasively of this, " ³ ***We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.***" **1 John 1:3 (NIV)**

We are called to share the gospel with others so that they can fellowship or come together with us because our togetherness is with the Lord. We come together so others can come together with us and we can all be together with God.

There is definitely something about being with other believers - growing together, experiencing life, and supporting one another that is unique about the church. The church is not an exclusive country club designed just for members. It is not a charity designed just to lend aid to non-members but keeping a safe distance from. It is something in between. It is family - family that lifts up those in it and embraces new people of every stripe, with love hoping they can be part of it.

I love the church. I lived a fraction of my Christian adult life away from church because I felt wronged by it. I missed so much. In ways, I missed **it** so much. If you're not faithfully attending a church somewhere, for whatever reason, it is important to be part of one in your community. Books and e-mails are cheap imitations for the joys and strengths you'll find in a real-life fellowship.

I realize we cannot assemble together right now in real-life worship. The coronavirus has **temporarily** put a stop to that. Notice I put strong emphasis on the word *temporarily*. We are getting closer to that time when we will *assemble together again*. That may be three to four weeks away, it may be a bit longer, but that day will come. It will probably require some social distancing and face masks. It will continue to be restrictive in some ways—**but we will assemble together again! Satan never wins!**

So how will that look? How will that feel? I have to tell you after seeing members of our congregation who participated in bringing all of you our worship this past Sunday (without the aid of a zoom lens or through the windshield of their cars) if felt awfully good! As human beings, we are meant to live in community, not the lives of hermits. Our lives are so much healthier when we are in close contact with one another. I believe it is how God made us—in God's image. Even God lives in community as three in one!

When the time comes to gather again, some will be wary of close proximity to others—I get that. Do what you must to feel safe and comfortable. But remember, this virus will eventually die out or will be controlled, whether through antidote or antibodies, or the grace of God. In time, you will need to be reconnected with community, with your Christian family.

I'll leave you with an old illustration I've seen or heard a number of times before.

A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of his local newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So I think I'm wasting my time and the pastors are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this comeback:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

We're getting closer, so keep up the faith. I'm missing you all. See you in church soon!