

Focus

As a result of the physical separation caused by COVID-19, many of us have been feeling discouraged to continue in regular fellowship, and the importance of gathering together as a faith community has diminished. We want to renew a sense of spiritual community and put into action the importance of gathering together to the life of a believer, in light of the spiritual fatigue caused by the pandemic.

What does it mean to gather as a spiritual community?

This passage from Acts 2:42-47 is an exemplary illustration:

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.

From this passage, we can see the many elements of gathering as a faith community: sharing everything with each other, meeting the needs of others, praising God, all done with hearts of gladness and sincerity. But what is the importance of all this?

A Living, Loving Response

We are called to not be alone on our faith journeys. As part of living in response to Christ's salvation, we are called to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together...encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:24-25). This verse from Hebrews is tied to the verses right before it, a greater call for us to live according to our faith, all because we have been given "confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us" (Hebrews 10:19-20). It is because of what Christ has done for us, providing a hope and purpose for us, that we are able to share that same love and live out the two greatest commandments: love God and love others. Christian fellowship is where God's love can abound, all as a reflection of the greatest act of love that has been shown to us.

Part of a Greater Whole

Despite us each being called to be vessels that reflect Christ's love, there is no one perfect person in whom God is completely manifested. We are all part of the body of Christ, and "the body is not made up of one part but of many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). With all our individual strengths and flaws, we are each members of the body of Christ, and are called to have "no division" and "equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). It is God's will for us to be united as a greater whole, each individual having unique gifts that complement the other members.

As Iron Sharpens Iron...

As part of the body of Christ, called to live out love in response to what Christ has done, we are also called to support each other on our spiritual journeys through accountability: "*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*" (Proverbs 27:17). God works through our relationships with each other to mold and shape us into Christlikeness. Furthermore, God uses others to help us when we stumble, in our times of need: "*Two are better than one...if either of them falls down, one can help the other up*" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10). Thus, accountability is a vital means of sanctification and ultimately building God's kingdom.

It is our desire to renew the importance of Christian fellowship in our personal spiritual walks: to see gathering together as an active, loving response to Christ's love, a collective unity of the body of Christ and a means of shaping believers into Christlikeness.