

The Church: United When Apart

Hebrews 10:24-25

1. The Church Is A CATALYST: Stir One Another Towards Love And Ministry

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

2. The Church Is A COMMUNITY: Connect With One Another With Regularity

^{25a} not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some,

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

3. The Church Is A COMFORTER: Encourage One Another Through Difficult Days

^{25b} but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Conclusion: At the beginning of the year, we launched our annual goal to be F.I.T..

- **Faithful** – How can you challenge yourself to grow more deeply in Christ while sheltered in?
- **Involved** – How can we minister to others in our church creatively while sheltered in?
- **Trained** – How can we help you grow during while you're sheltered in?
 - Join us for a weekly Zoom class: "How To Know God: An Introduction To Theology," Tuesday, 7:30pm – 8:30pm, starting April 28.

Discussion:

- Why does a believer need church?
- What personal excuses do we need to fight through to "not neglect to meet together?"
- How does being in fellowship with others stimulate you to love and good works?
- If you've been just watching online, but not participating in the lives of others, what will you do to minister to others?

The Church: United When Apart

Hebrews 10:24-25

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Introduction:

- Thank you for joining Fellowship Bible Church for worship this morning.
- To make the effort to feed the kids, wake up the teens and put on a fresh pair of sweatpants is appreciated.

Ie/ Johnny wouldn't wake up for church one Sunday. His mom had to keep waking him, but he would just bury his head in the pillow and say "I'm sleeping!" After enough cajoling, his mom declares: "Johnny, there are 3 reasons why you should wake up and get to church:

- One – God expects you to be at church this morning
 - Two – The congregation expects you to be at church this morning
 - And Three – You're The PASTOR!!
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- Even people
 - A church that is manifesting "the fruit of the Spirit" is practicing the "one another" injunctions that build up the body of Christ and lead to one-mindedness and unity. A church that is reflecting the "acts of the sinful nature" is carnal and is practicing the "one anothers" that keep the church worldly and in a state of disunity. Getz, Gene A. (2011-03-01). Building Up One Another (One Another Series) (Kindle Locations 128-130). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.
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- **One Another – Works of the Flesh**
 - lusting for one another (Rom. 1:27)
 - judging one another (Rom. 14:13)
 - depriving one another (1 Cor. 7:5)
 - biting one another (Gal. 5:15a)
 - devouring one another (Gal. 5:15b)
 - destroying one another (Gal. 5:15c)
 - provoking one another (Gal. 5:26a)
 - envying one another (Gal. 5:26b)
 - lying to one another (Col. 3:9)
 - hating one another (Titus 3:3)
 - slandering one another (James 4:11)
 - grumbling against one another (James 5:9)
 - **One Another – Fruit of the Spirit**
 - members of one another (Rom. 12:5)
 - being devoted to another (Rom. 12:10a)
 - honoring one another (Rom. 12:10b)

- being of the same mind toward one another (Rom. 12:16; 15:5)
- loving one another (Rom. 13:8; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thes. 1:3; Heb. 10:24; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5)
- edifying one another (Rom. 14:19)
- accepting one another (Rom. 15:7)
- instructing one another (Rom. 15:14)
- greeting one another (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)
- waiting for one another (1 Cor. 11:33)
- caring for one another (1 Cor. 12:25)
- serving one another (Gal. 5:13)
- carrying one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- bearing with one another (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13)
- being kind to one another (Eph. 4:32)
- submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5)
- esteeming one another (Phil. 2:3)
- encouraging one another (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11, 14)
- confessing sins to one another (James 5:16a)
- praying for one another (James 5:16b)
- offering hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- fellowshiping with one another (1 John 1:7)

A Church Is ...

- A **Catalyst** That Stimulates Love And Benevolence
- A **Community** That Connects Interpersonally
- A **Comforter** To Those Facing Difficult Days

1. The Church Is A Catalyst: Stir One Another Towards Love And Ministry

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

- "stir up," "stimulate" = *paroxusmos* = provoke, excite
 - This word was used negatively of a stirred up conflict between Paul & Barnabas over the reliability of John Mark in Acts 15:39
 - F.F. Bruce relates this word to the English word "**provocation**" (NICNT, Heb 10:24)
 - J.Ramsey Michaels associates the word to "**outburst**" – intentional (not random) acts of kindness (Cornerstone Bible Commentary, Vol. 17, Heb 10:24)
 - The author of Hebrews uses it positively
 - One picture of "stir up" is **stoking a fire**
 - Adding coal or logs, moving the logs around to get more oxygen or contact to flames
- **Catalyst:** "an agent that provokes or speeds significant change or action"
 - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catalyst>
 - ie/ chemistry - mix two chemicals - not useful until a catalyst is added to provoke the other chemicals to do their stuff
 - ie/ super glues - 2-3 tubes - one is the active ingredient that stimulates the adhesion process to begin
 - e.g. iron is a catalyst for producing ammonia

- e.g. vanadium is a catalyst for producing sulfuric acid
- Catalysts creates **bridges** for molecules to interact with each other
- Catalysts can also form **chain reactions**
- Chain reactions wonderfully fit the definition of **outburst** or **provocation**
- Stirring one another up creates bridges and chain reactions
- Gathering together, even via video conferencing, or sitting with your family to watch church online, creates bridges
- Being charged with the Word of God to understand and obey is stirred up by each other to chain reaction
 - Why are fellowship groups important – creates bridges and chain reactions
 - Continue to meet – even through Zoom, text or a phone call
- In chemistry, the opposite of a catalyst is an **inhibitor**
 - some things aren't getting done because we are neglecting to provide the encouragement to stimulate
 - to stimulate assumes that things with believers can become stale, comfortable, unproductive
 - to stimulate also assumes that believers must also take the initiative to stir things up using the catalyst of encouragement
 - Q: When's the last time you approached a brother/sister in Christ and asked them how their spiritual walk is going? Your encouragement could arouse someone to get right with God.
 - Q: What needs or people in our groups need to be stimulated? What can you do to stir it up?

James 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well

- You can't love others when you're isolating yourself
 - We're to love God – we can't love Him when we hide from reading His Word, hide from prayer or hide from God's people
 - We're to love others – we can't love Him when we hide from Church
 - During shelter in place, it's easy to not get online with church or a fellowship
 - It's easier to hide out
 - We are to be in community with each other so we can stir one another up
- Hendricksen & Kistemaker: "the writer of Hebrews shows that love is the greatest because it reaches out to others. **Love is communal**. For man, love extends to God and one's neighbor." (Hebrews New Testament Commentary, p. 290)

2. The Church Is A Community: Connect With One Another With Regularity (25a)

25a not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some,

- God commands believers to meet together (25a)
- “neglecting” = Gr. *enkataleipontes* = **abandoning, forsaking** the church congregation
 - This word was also used to depict Jesus’ cry of being forsaken by God on the cross
 - Heb 13:5 uses this word that God would not forsake us
- “meet together” – *episynagogue* – epi (over), synagogue – not just the main gathering worship service in the synagogue, but other fellowships – **more than just the main worship service**
- But the Hebrew church also had “some” individuals who would not meet regularly
- Henricksen & Kistemaker: “One of the first indications of a lack of love toward God and the neighbor is for a Christian to stay away from the worship services. He forsakes the communal obligations of attending these meetings and displays the symptoms of selfishness and self-centeredness.” (p. 291)
- “habit of some” = Gr. *ethos* = attitude, regular thinking
 - they would not have been mentioned if they were unsaved or not a part of the church – but these were people who should be regular but are not
 - Lane: “The reference to ‘custom’ or ‘habit’ (ἔθος) implies a situation of indifference and apathy” (Lane, William L.. *Hebrews 9-13, Volume 47B*, Word Biblical Commentary, Zondervan. Kindle Edition)
 - Shelter in Place can be an excuse
 - Being introverted
 - I’m glad for how so many have taken the step to learn how to connect technologically
 - Some have got on social media for the sake of connecting spiritually
- The Didache (a late 1st century manual on how to do church): “But be frequently gathered together seeking the things which are profitable for your souls.” (*The Didache, The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 1, 16:2, p. 333)
- Friday night, someone mentioned how they saw this old show called Cheers. The older people laughed that some thought it was an old show (that’s the people who think Andy Griffith is an old show)
- Theme song ends “where everybody knows your name”
- Bruce Larson, *Dare To Live Now*: “The neighborhood bar is possibly the best counterfeit there is to the fellowship Christ wants to give His church. It’s an imitation, dispensing liquor instead of grace, escape rather than reality. But it is a permissive, accepting, and inclusive fellowship. It is unshockable, it is democratic. You can tell people secrets and they usually don’t tell others, or want to. The bar flourishes not because most people are alcoholics, but because God has put into the human heart the desire to know and be known, to love and to be loved, and so many seek a counterfeit at the price of a few beers.”

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Koinonia – commonness, share together, joint participation

- Never used in Gospels, used once in Acts by Luke
 - Used 13x by Paul – always focus on common participation in the body of Christ
 - Never used in a mere social sense, God is always the emphasis
 - 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:14; Phil 1:5; Phil 6; Gal 2:9; Tit 1:4; Phil 1:7
- **Fellowship** = Gr. *koinonia* - used 60x in NT- comes from the root word which means “to share, to have in common”
 - *koinonia* is used more than just in a material sense, but mostly in a spiritual sense
 - finding our commonness in Christ
 - sharing our common struggles with each other
 - Tolstoy - “You cannot have a brotherhood without brothers.”
 - **Partnership** – *Partner with each other in the work that God has called us to.*
 - Peter uses form of word to identify the partnership of Peter with James & John in the fishing business (Lk 5:10)
 - Phil 6,17 – partnership in gospel
 - Phil 1:5 – partnership in gospel
 - **Sharing** – *Share with each other the blessings (spiritual & material) God has provided for us.*
 - Acts 2:42,44 – share blessings of God in His Word, prayer, communion, possessions
 - Communion = share in the personal meaning of Christ’s death & our salvation
 - Shared possessions
 - John Loftness: “What is fellowship as defined in the New Testament? Just this: participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ. Fellowship is sharing something in common on the deepest possible level of human relation- ship—our experience of God himself.” (*Why Small Groups?*)
 - Charles Swindoll: “Think of it! Three thousand brand new believers, there they stood in the streets of Jerusalem...they had no church building. They had no pastor. They had no church constitution (which is probably the reason why they got along so well). They had no board members, no handbook, no promise of what the future held for them. What did they have? They had Christ and they also had each other.” (*Growing Deep in the Christian Life*)
 - Communion through Zoom on May 3rd, 1pm on Zoom
 - We all share the commonness of salvation in Christ
 - Every member of the church is a sinner – each has acknowledged before God that we fall short of His glory, transgressed over His righteousness and violated His law (if not through, through thought).

- Every member of the church is saved – each placed their faith in Christ as Savior – He died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead’

3. The Church Is A Comforter: Encourage One Another Through Difficult Days
25b but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- **Encourage** = *parakalein* = called alongside
 - *Para* = alongside
 - *Kaleo* = called
- Reason: “encourage one another”
- Together – we give courage
- Ie/ Sports – team – inspire teammates
- Ie/ Church – being here inspires others
- When you’re not here, we’re short an inspirer
- “all the more as you see the Day drawing near”
 - Day of the Lord – Christ’s return
 - Day of Reckoning where we must give an account
- Jesus tells us when it is close for Him to come again - the pressure on believers will get greater
- The closer that day comes, we need to prepare ourselves to give an account of our lives

Romans 2:16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

2 Peter 3:10-11 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

- It took a village to prepare for our **wedding** – friends made flowers, decorated the church, decorated the car, rehearsed music, help us put on tuxedos and dresses, make food, make invitations, premarital counseling, the church members gathered together to pay for our honeymoon – all aimed toward “that day”
- How we need to help each other prepare for Christ’s coming – to be faithful, strong – not hiding, quitting or forsaking
- As that “day” nears, it will also become more **difficult, sinful and challenging**

2 Timothy 3:1 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty.

- Days grow more discouraging
- as persecution increases - struggles with faith increase, persecution, accusations
- We need to be there for each other during hard times

Conclusion: At the beginning of the year, we launched our annual goal to be F.I.T.

F.I.T. **Faithful, Involved, Trained**

- 1. Faithful** – to spiritual growth, biblical knowledge, prayer and Word

- 2. Involved** – spiritual fitness is not to be in a vacuum, but in the context of church/ministry
 - Participation in fellowships – children, youth, college/career, young families, senior citizens, Cantonese, cancer support, men’s fellowship, women’s prayer group, and several prayer groups continue to meet over video conferencing
 - Membership to church
 - Witnessing to neighbors
 - Serving the community
 - Ministering to others

- 3. Trained**
 - How To Know God: An Introduction To Theology
 - Leadership
 - Ministry – Day Camp, Adult ministries, Youth ministries, Children’s ministries

Discussion:

1. Why does a believer need church?
2. What personal excuses do we need to fight through to “not neglect to meet together?”
3. How does being in fellowship with others stimulate you to love and good works?
4. If you’ve been just watching online, but not participating in the lives of others, what will you do to minister to others?