

More Reflections While Virus Rules Close Our Churches

Acts 2, NLT-42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—47 all while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

During these difficult days when all public gatherings are outlawed, our congregation is complying, of course. We're trying to be law-abiding citizens. But this doesn't mean that we enjoy being cut off from one another for so long a time.

We like each other. Often when we visit before Bible study or when we stand around and talk after a worship service, when we hear the laughter and the chatter, I jest to someone nearby that it's a shame that our people don't like each other better. (If you've ever belonged to a congregation where people were at odds and angry with others there, you know how blessed we are to have a church full of people who love one another and enjoy times together.)

But, having said that, we're not a New Testament church. Not like that first one in Jerusalem (the one described in the Acts 2 passage above). We don't meet and commune daily like they did. Having admitted that, however, we once- (or twice, or three times)- a week Christians still feel isolated and sad whenever some unforeseen disaster like this virus outbreak keeps us apart for weeks at a time.

Although our entire congregation has never been separated for long periods, some of our families have experienced this spiritual loneliness during times of prolonged illness. And almost all our shut-ins live in this kind of lonely world all the time. Maybe our present virus-mandated separation from each other will teach us to look for more ways to reach out to our people who no longer can share in our church's times of worship and fellowship. Being lonely right now may wake us up to the sad fact that these dear people are lonely all the time.

Being virus-segregated for a few weeks may also teach us not to let trivialities cause us to skip our church's regular worship and study times. Just being together actually blesses us more than we may have realized. Being told we can't meet is somewhat like being told we can't eat ice cream or munch on chocolate. Only when blessings get cut off are we likely to realize how much they meant to us.

So—whether it happens next week or next month—pray that our congregation will soon be able to assemble together again, and resolve to make attendance a new priority then.