

Meeting as Church Physically

Covid-19 will continue to be part of our existence. It is an additional threat that humanity will have to learn to live with. We as church also. The world has changed. We have now learned to live stream our church services – and to follow them from our homes. This certainly has its advantages. Why should we then bother to return to meeting as church physically?

Being a digital church is like eating a defrosted microwave meal. It helps and it is better than nothing. But we all prefer a freshly prepared meal or a barbecue in the garden with friends! There are blessings attached to meeting together.

1. A rhythmic event: In nature, most things happen in seasonal rhythms. We humans also benefit from rhythms, a fixed time to eat, sleep, exercise and even brush our teeth. If you want to learn something, it helps if you develop a study or practice rhythm. Early in the history of the Church, believers began to gather on the first day of the week, the resurrection day. The apostle John gave it a special name: “the day of the Lord” (Rev 1:10). Personally, I experience as helpful the dynamics of preparing myself physically, mentally, and spiritually to go to an agreed place to meet the Lord together with fellow believers. It becomes an weekly event that marks His day.

2. A fellowship experience: By meeting physically, greeting each other, singing and worshiping together we are built up. By interacting with each other, waiting on each other, sometimes giving in to the preferences of others and forgiving each other, our Christian character grows. As a church community, we can show by the way we treat each other that we love each other (1 Pet. 2:17), that we are family (Gal. 6:10). Church members can work together to make visitors feel welcome (Acts 15:4). Meeting one another is an essential part of being a Christian. That is why the believers “devoted themselves” to having fellowship together (Acts 2:42).

3. An experience of God’s presence: Jesus said, “For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them” (Matt. 18:20). Yes, the Lord Jesus is with us when we are at home, at work or at school. But in a very real, special and different way, He is present when the church gathers in His name. I use the word ‘different’ because otherwise these words of Jesus would not make sense. We are invited to experience something special when we come together to pray and worship in His name,

to meet and hear Him speak through the songs we sing together and through His word.

4. The opportunity to witness: Of course we can show our love for and devotion to each other in digital ways throughout the week. But showing unity and harmony when we come together as a church, with our different temperaments, preferences, ages, social-economic backgrounds and cultures, we become a living witness of what Christ can do in people’s lives. This harmony in diversity is more than a social miracle. The apostle Paul explains that when unbelievers come in during a service, they can be touched by God’s Spirit (1 Cor. 14:23-25). Meeting each other physically as church can be a wonderful and effective way of witnessing.



5. A ‘God used me’ experience: Christ longs to bless others through you. Through a smile, a greeting, an empathetic listening ear. Through your ‘being there’. We are always the body of Christ. When we meet physically, the body of Christ moves in a special way. Before you leave home for church, make it clear to the Lord that you are willing and open to receive (from Him and others), but also be prepared to give (to Him and others). Then you will be more likely to see the opportunities to serve and notice the promptings of the Holy Spirit who wants to use you to say or do something to be a blessing to one or more of those present. Come with a conscious willingness to serve, give and be used by the Lord.

Conclusion

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together...” (Heb. 10:24-25). Perhaps it is time to rethink your priorities or adjust your weekly rhythm, or time to ask the Lord to use you to bless others when you physically meet as church. Be creative. Choose to make meeting as church with your brothers and sisters a special event, a highlight in your week, something to look forward to, rather than something that needs squeezing into your agenda. Perhaps again, or for the first time, that first day of the week will feel to you like “the Lord’s day”!

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