New Ways to Gather

I am mostly an extroverted type of person. I enjoy time gathering with people. When I gather with other Christians I am encouraged and loved. It helps me be a better man, husband, father, friend, and Christian. What do we do when we are forced to isolate?

We often touch on Hebrews 10:24-25 in our messages. It is a central part of Cell Life Church and it should be a central part of the Church in general. It applies in so many situations. Let’s read it and start breaking it down.

### Hebrews 10:24-25

(24) And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, (25) not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The writer is encouraging the Hebrew believers. He has been giving all sorts of instruction and correction for issues he has been made aware of in the groups formed amongst the Hebrews. This bit of the instruction he is giving goes to the core of Christianity.

## Spurring One Another On

Verse 24 says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,” He is instructing the believers to think about this. Do some brainstorming, you might say, on how we can spur one another on. Consider here means “to observe”, “to contemplate”, or “to have intelligent insight”.

The word spur makes me think of an almost violent prodding. When you spur a horse, you are poking a horse with a metal spur on your boot to get it to get moving quickly. It is a jolting act, like a shove. There is no mistaking it. There is no misunderstanding the action. You are telling the horse to get going. In this verse, we are being instructed to think about ways to spur one another. That sounds violent almost.

Some translations say to stir up in one another love and good deeds. The Greek word translated to English here is *paroxysm,* which means a “convulsion.” It speaks of forceful action.

I think this word is chosen carefully because we must be direct and clear in our intentions. It also implies that what we are doing is urgent and is not subtle. Again, much like spurring a horse to get going quickly. We spur one another on out of urgency and need. But what are we spurring one another on to?

We are to spur one another on to love and good deeds. This love is agape’ love. A love of affection and charity. Jesus describes this love to us in John 13:34-35 says:

### John 13:34-35

(34) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This is the love we are to spur one another on to. We are also to stir up good deeds. James 1:27 tells us:

### James 1:27

(27) Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

We are to be thinking about ways to encourage each other to take care of widows and orphans and other things like that. We need to contemplate on ways to love one another and serve each other and our communities together in Christian love. But we cannot do that if we cannot come together.

## Gathering Together

The third thing we are to think about is ways to encourage other believers to not give up coming together. That is difficult right now. As we said in the beginning, I am an extrovert. I enjoy being with people. The current COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, that most of us are enduring, are difficult for me. I crave human interaction with other brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Many Christians gather in church buildings each Sunday or in small groups in living rooms and other places. But we have been prevented from doing that for a month now. How do we continue to spur one another on? How do continue to love one another and encourage one another?

The writer of Hebrews mentions others who have given up gathering. We do not know who these others are specifically, except that they at least were brothers and sisters in the Christian faith that they no longer see. Maybe they stopped coming to worship services at the local gathering place because of fear of persecution. Maybe there were laws put in place to prevent their gathering. There are many possibilities. But the writer is clear, we must think of ways to come together so we can love and encourage one another more and more as we near the return of Jesus.

Many of us around the world are being prevented from meeting in person because of social distancing orders or guidelines from our governments. In some places, complete shelter in place at home orders have been issued. That cannot stop us from encouraging one another or loving one another. We must consider ways to still encourage and love one another and stay in compliance with the rules that are keeping us safe.

## New Ways to Gather and Serve

We can do things that the schools are doing. We can use technology like Skype, Zoom, or Google Hangouts to hold small group meetings. We can telephone each other and pray for one another. We can listen to one another’s needs and try to figure out ways to help one another. We can read scripture together on the telephone. We can use social media like Facebook to stay in contact and to share videos like this and then discuss them afterward.

We can go to the market for brothers and sisters who are more vulnerable to the virus and leave their items at their door so they can get them instead of jeopardizing their health going out themselves.

COVID-19 is not the only thing causing some to no longer join a group of believers for regular fellowship and prayer and worship. Some have lost their way. Some have been neglected by the Church and therefore they blame God and have walked away. Some have been treated poorly by brothers or sisters in the faith or local church leadership.

Whatever the reason, it is imperative for us to reach out to them. We must love them. We must consider ways to draw them back into the fold. One of the best ways is to start a new group in your own living room. Devote this group to reading the scripture, praying together, and doing good deeds like taking care of widows and orphans in your own community or in a community in need somewhere else in the world.

Some may have given up meeting together because it is illegal where they are. The Church in these places meets secretly. It takes a long time for new believers to be trusted and invited into a secret home church. But this is happening every day in places like China and Iran. Pray for these brothers and sisters as they risk their very lives every day just speaking to one another.

## Conclusion

Remember, as we spur one another on, it is not time to be subtle. We must think of ways to stir each other up to love and good deeds, encouraging one another to come together often in some way, and be the hands and feet of Jesus in this lost and dying world.