

## **Another Article about 'Virtual' Meetings**

*"So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another."* 1 Corinthians 11:33

Our verse today, found in instructions about the Lord's Supper, reminds us of the value of worshipping together. That is not a new thought. In the Psalms we find that concept repeated often. For instance: Psa. 34:3 *"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together."* Psa. 122:1 *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"*

Together — you and me. That spells fellowship. That is the foundation of unity. That is team work. That is a church. Sounds simple. Basic concepts. Nothing too new here. However, there is coming a new wrinkle. The pandemic has changed so much. Books are being published about the post-covid church, and the arising virtual church.

Some national health experts are declaring that society ought never to shake hands again. Many prominent religious leaders are declaring that as much as 30% of the church will never again gather in a church building. So, the virtual church becomes a reality. Worshipping from home becomes the new way of doing things. And, there is a great appeal to that. One doesn't have to get up early, get cleaned up and drive down to the building. You can roll out of bed in your jammies, with bed hair, have a cup of coffee and just worship away. How easy. How convenient. How wonderful this is.

Out of this pandemic, look for many church buildings to be sold. Why have all that real estate when the virtual church is the new wave. Just a camera, a few lights and a means to broadcast and worship comes to you. There will be a rise of production teams rather than preachers. More will know about livestreaming than the living word of God. Virtual will be the way the future goes.

### **Now, What's My Take On All Of This?**

First, we must not get too comfortable with virtual. For now, it may be what we have to do, but not forever. We need to be reminding folks that we need them back in the church building. Staying at home may be easy, comfortable and what they like, but it's not the N.T. pattern. Our verse today states, *"when you come together."* We need to be together. We need to see each other's faces. We need to hear each other's voices. And, Zoom isn't the answer. The answer is to get up and get down to the church house when you can.

Second, convenient has never been in God's vocabulary. Do you think it was convenient for Noah to build the ark? How about Moses going to Pharaoh? How about wandering through the wilderness? And, the cross? Convenient? Paul's travels? Sometimes convenient can be just one step away from being lazy. We already worship conveniently. We gather in church buildings that are cooled in the summer and heated in the winter. The pews are padded. There are bathrooms everywhere. There are lights, speakers, powerpoint, song books. I'd say that we already have this convenient thing down pretty good.

Third, there is a mighty temptation to skip around when worshipping virtually. Church is singing a song you don't like. Go somewhere else for a few moments. Don't like the prayer, then fast forward. Hit the high points of the sermon—not the whole thing. And, what we have done is really gutted worship. It's so easy. Can't fast forward through a song when we are in the church building. Maybe that's a good thing. Maybe I just need that song. Can't skip a prayer while in the church building. Good. I need to hear others pray. And, in the church building, I have to listen to the whole sermon. The whole thing—from beginning to end. And, maybe, just maybe, I need to hear the whole thing.

Fourth, the virtual church leaves the impression that once I have "done church," I'm done. I watched. I sang. I prayed. I'm done. Now on to other things. But worship isn't the end of my responsibilities as a Christian. There is much more that God expects than a Sunday worship. Sitting in the church building reminds me of that. I see others and I'm reminded that I need to pray for that family. I need to send a card to that person. I need to connect with that one. Family means obligations and responsibilities. In the virtual church, it's just me and my tablet. Isolated. Unplugged. And, soon to be indifferent.

Across the country, school teachers are seeing that virtual education is ok, but it's not as good as in the classroom. The need to see, hear and interact with others is important. The same

is true of our Bible classes and our worship. Bible class is more than just imparting the information, there is the interaction, the connections, the help we receive from others.

We know that in other relationships in life, virtual doesn't work. Can you image a virtual marriage. Here is a couple and they do not even live in the same state, yet, virtually they are married. No. How about a virtual family? No. A virtual job? No. A virtual vacation? Forget it. I have watched virtual concerts. Not the same. Not even close. A virtual church? A virtual preacher? A virtual membership? Forget it. Don't go there.

Some will. Some will see nothing wrong with being a member of VC (virtual church). Instead of a street address, there will be a website address given. I wonder how a virtual church practices discipline? Most modern churches never do. But if they did, what would they do? Defriend someone? Take away a password? How will Paul's words in 1 Cor 5, "*Not even to eat with such a one,*" work virtually?

The modern churches always chases after the newest fads. Virtual church is the newest. And, in the end, I suppose they hope to go to Heaven. I wonder if folks in a virtual church would be satisfied with a virtual Heaven? Not me. Give me the real thing!

Come together—that's what disciples did. That's what we must do.

- by Roger Shouse

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## ***What Did He Say!?! I Disagree!!!***

In a perfect world we would agree with everyone about everything. Obviously, this is not a perfect world! Therefore, we are not surprised when people from various walks of life disagree on a whole host of subjects. Christians working together in the Lord's church are not exempt from this reality.

As God's Word is publicly taught, be it in a Bible class or in a sermon, there is the possibility that you might hear something that doesn't 'ring true' with your understanding of the Scriptures. The question is not: will such disagreements happen? Rather, the question is: how will you react when it does happen?

You have several options available, but not all of them are right and proper. For instance, you can just keep your disagreements to yourself. But, following this course will certainly not resolve the issue. Instead, it is likely to 'fester' like an untreated sore, and sooner or later – usually sooner – it will lead to more serious problems that will be harder to settle.

Another reaction to differences is to talk about them – but not directly to the one with whom you have the difference. What we're describing here is the sinful practice of gossip and slander. Yes, unfortunately, there are folks who will lend a willing ear to such words, but the outcome is that the problem is not fixed; in fact, it has been multiplied by additional evil deeds

The right, and logically best, approach is to openly discuss your concerns with the one who made the comments in question. When this is done, we often find that the potential conflict was only a misunderstanding. People, including Bible class teachers and preachers, often do a rather poor job of expressing themselves and leave wrong impressions. On the other hand, listeners can also fail to hear things exactly as they were stated. Simple misunderstandings can be quickly resolved if we go directly to the other person involved.

In areas where true and legitimate disagreements persist, we must all be devoted to seeking unity through additional and careful study of His Word.

- by Greg Gwin