

## **Covid-19 (Thoughts About Returning To 'Normal')**

**Serious talk.** Guys, I'm a little bit scared. When my elders announced we would be resuming class at the church building on Wednesdays, of course I was excited. BUT—and here's what I debated sharing publicly because I'm embarrassed—there was a part of me that was disappointed about "having" to be at the building Wednesday again.

**Disappointed.** Why? Because it's been over 3 months since the church met together for Bible study. I've grown accustomed to coming home from work, eating dinner with the family, and then relaxing in the living room watching some sort of canned Bible study on my TV (with my family). I've officially gotten out of the habit of the family getting ready for Bible class and driving to the church building on Wednesdays. So there was a part of my heart that was actually disappointed—bummed—over the "burden" of going back to Bible study - **and that scares me.**

Of course I'm taking my family back. That's not a question. I'm excited! There's no danger of me or my wife "falling away." I've just gotten out of the habit. And psychologically, my mind has grown accustomed to it. I don't like this about my heart. And in my prayers, I ask God to rid my heart of sinful desires like this (like the desire to stay home when I can assemble, which is a heart problem).

Here are some other scary thoughts to me:

- What if I was 18? That time was an impressionable time for me. I look back, and I sometimes think I could have gone one way or another with my faith. I would have been vulnerable to this if this happened to me then. I NEEDED the assembly—every assembly.
- What if I was 5? Or 10? Or 13? Kids that are that age are going to remember this. And we have deprived them of assembling with the saints in some major, important ways.
- What if I was a new Christian? What if I was a weak Christian?

If I felt disappointment in my heart, think what others may be feeling at the thought of "going back to church."

I still think the churches, collectively, did the right thing in postponing their assemblies for a number of weeks. But elders did this to better assess the situation. At first, because of the unknowns, the virus was a major concern. And it still is a concern. But over 3 months later, at what cost?

This virus isn't going away any time soon. At some point, we need to think, "What is the end game?" Am I willing to be absent from the assembly of my church family for another month? Three more months? Six? 2021? (Why even go to church anymore? Let's sell the building and do everything online! Is that what some of us are good with??)

At some point, we have to ask: what's a greater threat to the church: a virus? Or the effects "scattering" is having on the church after months of isolation?

I don't want to oversimplify things. But if your conscience isn't as burdened over this anymore, then—I say this kindly but bluntly as your brother in Christ—you have a heart problem. The virus is no longer the biggest danger in your life.

God designed His church to be an ASSEMBLING church. Online "worship," while I've been thankful for it, will never be a substitute. His people need to be willing to take a little bit of RISK to follow His plan and ideal. We need to have a little bit of FAITH—not that God will miraculously protect us from getting the virus—but that assembling with His people is more pleasing to Him than cutting ourselves off from the church.

Let's take safety measures. But I need "church." I need to be in relatively close proximity to my brethren. I need the friendships. I need the encouragement. I need the congregational singing. I need the classes. I need the accountability. I need to hear YOU—in person—push me to keep going, "and all the more as we see the Day drawing near."

Let's not give Satan one more inch.

- by Ben Giselbach

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## **Some Things to Remember . . .**

- How brief and uncertain life is.

- How sure and final death is.
- How long eternity is.
- And sin:
  - how strong its appeal;
  - how persistent its temptation;
  - how deceptive its appearance;
  - how misleading its promise;
  - how fleeting its pleasure;
  - how tragic its consequences;
  - how horrible its punishment.
- How great God's love is.
- How wonderful Christ's sacrifice is.
- How powerful the gospel is.
- How important the church is.
- How precious one soul is.
- How pressing salvation is.
- How beautiful heaven is.
- How terrible hell is.

**- by Bill Crews**

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## ***Some Thoughts about Public Prayers***

We commend our men who are willing to help during the assemblies by leading the congregation in prayer. You are doing a good work - keep it up!

Please allow us to make a few suggestions that can improve our efforts in public prayers:

- 1) Speak UP! If you cannot be heard, you are not really doing your job. How can you 'lead' others if they can't hear you? You must project your voice in a louder and more forceful tone than you commonly do in normal conversation. A good way to measure how loudly you should speak is to imagine someone standing in the farthest corner of the building - then speak so they could easily hear you.
- 2) Remember that this is a public prayer. This will dictate what sort of things you should pray about. Private matters should be dealt with in private prayers.
- 3) Don't pray to be seen or heard by men (Matthew 6:5-8). You are not trying to impress men. You are speaking to the eternal Father in Heaven.
- 4) Give some thought to the length of your prayer. Public prayers do not need to be extremely long. The model prayer that Jesus prayed (Matthew 6:9-13) can be recited in less than 20 seconds. But, having said that, we should also advise you not to get in a big rush, either. Nervousness can make you speak so rapidly that it is hard for others to understand.
- 5) Don't sermonize. Again, you are speaking to God, not men. Don't use your prayer as an opportunity to 'make a point' with others who are in the assembly.
- 6) Do everything (volume, speed, content, motive, etc.) in such way that others will be able to add their "**amen**" at the end of the prayer (1 Corinthians 14:16).

**- by Greg Gwin**