

Revivals And Church History :: Quotes About House Churches

Quotes About House Churches - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/3/13 12:38

"We have no temples or alters." This statement, referring to Christians, comes from the pen of the apologist (defender) Minicus Felix, c 200, and all evidence supports its accuracy. Throughout at least the first two centuries there were no church buildings as such, and this was so remarkable that to the pagan population, it was considered grounds for accusing the Christians of 'atheism.' In a world notable for the number of its holy shrines and the rivers of blood that flowed daily from the sacrificial victims, Christians were conspicuous in that they possessed neither the first nor engaged in the second." Secular Use of Church Buildings, JG Davies, 1968: page 1.

"You mistakenly think we conceal what we worship since we have no temples or altars. Yet how can anyone make an image of God? Man himself is the image of God. How can anyone build a temple to Him, when the whole world can't contain Him? Even I, a mere human, travel far and wide. So how can anyone shut up the majesty of so great a Person within one small building? Isn't it better for Him to be dedicated in our minds and consecrated in our innermost hearts - rather than in a building?" Mark Felix in Octavius 2nd Century A.D.

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:19-24 (NIV)

"If you had asked, 'Where is the church?' in any important city of the ancient world where Christianity had penetrated in the first century, you would have been directed to a group of worshiping people gathered in a house. There was no special building or other tangible wealth with which to associate 'church', only people!" Walter Oetting, The Church of the Catacombs

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47 (NKJV)

As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Acts 8:3 (NKJV)

Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ. Romans 16:5 (NKJV)

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 1 Cor 16:19 (NKJV)

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house. Col 4:15 (NKJV)

... to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Philem 1:2 (NKJV)

"When the church was very young, it had no buildings. Let us begin with that striking fact. That the church had no buildings is the most noticeable of the points of difference between the church of the early days and the church of today. In the minds of most people today, "church" means first a building, probably something else second; but seldom does "the church" stand for anything other than a building. Yet here is the fact with which we start: the early church possessed no buildings and carried on its work for a great many years without erecting any." Ernest Loosley, When The Church Was Young

Francis Schaeffer, in his book The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century writes concerning dedicated church buildings in this way: "It is interesting, however, that the church was in their home. Lightfoot says that there were no church buildings as such before the third century. Since Lightfoot made that statement, however, archaeologists found a most interesting place in Rome. Roman houses - unless they were the great mansions- were relatively small. What archaeologists found was a place with the facade of two houses still untouched, but with the internal walls torn out to make a larger room."

om. And from everything that was found there, the archaeologists believe that this was a church building. This structure is dated at the end of the second century. But whether one accepts Lightfoot's starting point in the third century, or whether one dates it at the end of the second century, it really makes no difference. There is no biblical norm as to where, and where not, the church should meet. The central fact is that the early concept of the church had no connection with a church building. The church was something else: a group of Christians drawn together by the Holy Spirit in a place where they worked together in a certain form..."

Reformer Martin Luther wrote in 1526: "The right kind of evangelical order cannot be exhibited among all sorts of people, but those who are seriously determined to be Christians and confess the gospel with hand and mouth, must enroll themselves by name and meet apart in one house, for prayer, for reading, to baptize, to take the Sacrament, and exercise other Christian works. With such order it would be possible for those who did not behave in a Christian manner to be known, reprov'd, restored, or excluded, according to the rule of Christ (Matt. 18:15). Here also they could, in common, subscribe alms, which would be willingly given and distributed among the poor, according to the example of Paul (2 Cor. 9:1-12). Here it would not be necessary to have much or fine singing. Here a short and simple way of baptism and the Sacrament could be practiced, and all would be according to the Word and in love. But I cannot yet order and establish such an assembly...In the meantime I will call, excite, preach, help forward it, until Christians take the Word so in earnest, that they will themselves find how to do it and continue in it." Quoted by E. H. Broadbent in *The Pilgrim Church*

"Theologically, the church does not need temples. Church buildings are not essential to the true nature of the church. For the meaning of the tabernacle is God's habitation, and God already dwells within the human community of Christian believers. The people are the temple and the tabernacle... Thus, theologically church buildings are superfluous. They are not needed for priestly functions because all believers are priests and all have direct access, at whatever time and place, to the one great high priest. A church building cannot properly be "the Lord's house" because in the new covenant this title is reserved for the church as people (Eph. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:21). A church building cannot be a "holy place" in any special sense, for holy places no longer exist. Christianity has no holy places, only holy people." Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins*, Chapter 4

"The church is never a place, but always a people; never a fold but always a flock; never a sacred building but always a believing assembly. The church is you who pray, not where you pray. A structure of brick or marble can no more be the church than your clothes of serge or satin can be you. There is in this world nothing sacred but man, no sanctuary of man but the soul." John Havlik, *People-Centered Evangelism*

"Whether we are considering the smaller gatherings of only some Christians in a city, or the larger meetings involving the whole Christian population, it is in the home of one of the members that the 'ekklesia' is held-for example in the 'upper room.' Not until the third century do we have evidence of special buildings being constructed for Christian gatherings." Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*

Re: Quotes About House Churches - posted by dolfan (), on: 2016/3/13 13:13

Thank you for bringing this topic back to the fore of the forum! :)

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/3/13 14:54

It is interesting that amongst many revival movements and reformational movements there have not been MANY that have brought the Church back to the simplicity of home meetings. Now we see this happening though all over the world in large revival movements such as China.

Re: , on: 2016/3/13 22:19

Good stuff Greg! Thanks for sharing!

I saw another one I liked recently & posted it on my Instagram:

"We don't gather AT the church,
We gather AS the church!"

Amen!

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 8:56

Sooo, does that mean we are the church? :-)

Brother Blaine

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 11:19

I have some questions that I would love others here to answer:

- 1) Is it necessary for believers to gather in local churches with others in local assemblies? Is this commanded in the scriptures? Is this considered the normal christian life and assumed to be so by the apostles and early church fathers? Please provide backup if you can.
- 2) If believers choose to not do this or make no effort to do this what are they really missing out on, if anything? In other words, what difference does it make?
- 3) Is a christian wrong or disobedient or deceived or in rebellion or any such thing when they state that it is not necessary to "go to church" to be a healthy, Christ honoring christian?
- 4) If they are wrong in stating such things then why are they wrong, or again, does it really matter?
- 5) Can a christian be just as vital and healthy in their walk with Christ by having no regular real life contact with other believers in a mutually submissive and mutually accountable "local church" lifestyle?

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 11:25

I would love to answer these questions Awakened. The scriptures are pretty clear on these things. Hebrews 10:25 tells us not to neglect meeting together (fellowship) & the epistles (1 Corinthians and elsewhere) are clear the purpose, design, order of our meetings, etc. will answer better & line by line later when I have time.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 14:16

Thank you Jeff, please give me your thoughts. Some of the reasons I am asking because there is such renewed interest in the House Church movement and because there are vast numbers of wonderful believers who are not in any kind of regular fellowship at all. Many are in that in between, no mans land if you like, a place I have found myself in quite often over the years.

I think it would be a very profitable discussion to have here considering that the numbers of "nones" and "dones" are now numbering into the tens of millions in North America.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 14:42

The "Normal" Christian life is to follow the will of God, but if we know there are believers who love the Lord we should seek them out and strive to maintain unity with them in the bond of peace.

You may find yourself all alone at times, but always should be looking for fellowship. When Richard Wurmbrand got out of prison, he immediately disregarded the instructions of his captors and sought out fellowship of like-minded believers knowing he would be re-arrested and put in prison. Same with many other believers. Always, always, always their motivation was to find the true people of God and be with them. Richard Wurmbrand would convert his prison guards and then he would have fellowship. Prem Pradhan would do the same thing.

Joseph in Egypt is a great testimony of someone that God blessed in the "land of affliction" (the world). Joseph stayed true to the Lord, though his brethren rejected him lied about him and betrayed him.

God knows where you are and will lead you to find a brother if you are truly open and will be willing to jettison non-essentials for true fellowship.

Sometimes we must toil alone and wait on God but He can "expand your borders", cause you to forget your toil in a dry and desolate wilderness (the world) and make you fruitful in the land of affliction.

Don't forget these verses and the wonderful example of Joseph who dearly loved his brothers and chose to forgive them so that he could once again have fellowship with them. His forgiveness for them (releasing them from their debt), caused them to repent and turn again towards Joseph in brotherly love.

Gen 41:51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

Gen 41:52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Through Christ we can be very fruitful in this world (the land of our affliction). We are born-again for adversity and affliction and through it all, Christ will be the sweet savour that comes from a submitted (trusting) life to Him.

Look for disciples of Jesus.

"Many who should be disciples of Jesus today are still only disciples of...a reformer, a religious group or even an idea (that) has displaced their loyalty to Christ."

- Geoffrey T. Bull

If you find yourself without any fellowship, make some. Lead someone to the Lord.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2016/3/14 15:59

The complaints of the pagan society against the early Christians (that they were incestuous atheists and cannibals, etc.) sounds faintly akin to the complaints of big-box church professing Christians about home fellowship Christians today.

Andy Stanley on March 4, 2016: "When I hear adults say, 'Well I don't like a big church, I like about 200, I want to be able to know everybody,' I say, 'You are so stinking selfish. You care nothing about the next generation. All you care about is you and your five friends. You don't care about your kids anybody else's kids' â€ If you don't go to a church large enough where you can have enough middle schoolers and high schoolers to separate them so they can have small groups and grow up the local church, you are a selfish adult. Get over it."

(Stanley would argue with Spurgeon, who on April 5, 1874 preached this: "I want you to notice this, that they were breaking bread from house to house, and ate their food with gladness and singleness of heart. They did not think that religion was meant only for Sundays, and for what men now-a-days call the House of God. Their own houses were houses of God, and their own meals were so mixed and mingled with the Lord's Supper that to this day the most cautious student of the Bible cannot tell when they stopped eating their common meals, and when they began eating the Supper of the Lord. They elevated their meals into diets for worship: they so consecrated everything with prayer and praise that all around them was holiness to the Lord. I wish our houses were, in this way, dedicated to the Lord, so that we worshipped God all day long, and made our homes temples for the living God. A great dignitary not long ago informed us that there is great value in daily prayer in the parish church; he even asserted that, however few might attend, it was more acceptable than any other worship. I suppose that prayer in the parish church with nobody to join in it except the priest and the usher is far more effectual than the largest family gathering in the house at home. This was evidently this gentleman's idea, and I suppose the literature which he was best acquainted with was of such an order as, to have led him to draw that inference. Had he been acquainted with the Bible and such old fashioned books, he would have learned rather differently, and if some one should make him a present of a New Testament, it might perhaps suggest a few new thoughts to him. Does God need a house? He who made the heavens and the earth, does he dwell in temples made with hands? What crass ignorance this is! No house beneath the sky is more holy than the place where a Christian lives, and eats, and drinks, and sleeps, and praises the Lord in all that he does, and there is no worship more heavenly than that which is presented by holy families, devoted to the fear of the Lord.

To sacrifice home worship to public worship is a most evil course of action. Morning and evening devotion in a little home is infinitely more pleasing in the sight of God than all the cathedral pomp which delights the carnal eye and ear. Every truly Christian household is a church, and as such it is competent for the discharge of any function of divine worship, whatever it may be.")

We're called a lot of things by a lot of people. The comments range from the stumped ("You're doing what, again?!") to the snarky ("Oh, so you're a small group.") to the clueless ("I heard you had started your own church.") Lots of eye rolling

and poorly veiled sarcasm.

What stands out to me is not that non-Christians would accuse us of outrageous things, but that people in the professing church would. Whether it is being "stinking selfish" or milder rebukes, or dismissive smirks from those who know so much better and have a vested interest in brick and mortar/bell and whistle Christianity -- the cannibalism is real.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 16:31

Jesus was killed outside the gates of Jerusalem (the camp) and that is where He will be found, today.

Inside the camp, are all the world systems and Jesus has nothing to do with the political, religious, commercial or military systems of the world. He is not found in them for they do not bow down to the King of Heaven.

Heb 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

Heb 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/3/14 18:33

Quote:

-----1) Is it necessary for believers to gather in local churches with others in local assemblies? Is this commanded in the scriptures? Is this considered the normal christian life and assumed to be so by the apostles and early church fathers? Please provide backup if you can.

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5) Can a christian be just as vital and healthy in their walk with Christ by having no regular real life contact with other believers in a mutually submissive and mutually accountable "local church" lifestyle?

These are some good questions brother Mark is raising. House Churches I believe solve and help to have fellowship much more than larger assemblies. Sometimes you can go into a large church building and get a "sermon" but have very little fellowship with believers.

Many are giving up trying to find a larger local church after many tries. The idea of house churches have not fully caught on in North America but it is a growing trend. I personally feel it is very important for saints to at least gather in 2-3's on a consistent local basis.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 18:50

That is true Greg. Godly relationships are more important than sermons without relationships.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 18:53

Agreed J. Our Walk With Jesus is one of relationship. Our walk with one another should be one of relationship. Though it remains to the Holy Spirit to work that out in our lives.

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 19:14

It sure does, Bear. It does not always work out that way, but then we always have Jesus. He will never leave us or forsake us.

Re: Quotes About House Churches - posted by billy1980 (), on: 2016/3/14 19:21

"Theologically, the church does not need temples. Church buildings are not essential to the true nature of the church. For the meaning of the tabernacle is God's habitation, and God already dwells within the human community of Christian believers. The people are the temple and the tabernacle... Thus, theologically church buildings are superfluous. They are not needed for priestly functions because all believers are priests and all have direct access, at whatever time and place, to the one great high priest. A church building cannot properly be "the Lord's house" because in the new covenant this title is reserved for the church as people (Eph. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:21). A church building cannot be a "holy place" in any special sense, for holy places no longer exist. Christianity has no holy places, only holy people." Howard A. Snyder, *The Problem of Wineskins*, Chapter 4"

Amen

Re: , on: 2016/3/14 21:41

Amen! Stain glass windows have no power over the powers of darkness.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 1:49

This is true the people are Gods tabernacle...so what does that look like exactly?

God will dwell individually within a new born believer but how can that believer experience the same corporate filling of the new covenant tabernacle (the church) if a believer is not part of a local church (regardless of what kind of buildings they meet in)?

And if a gathering in a house is better than in a traditional building, why aren't people rushing to start and fill house churches everywhere? Why aren't all wholehearted believers a part of active and vibrant house churches?

Are they ALL going through solo seasons? For years? Really? We are talking about tens of millions of people who love the Lord and are no longer regularly attending a local church of ANY description.

Something other than merely a change of containers (a house) is needed if we are serious about getting back to what Jesus had in mind when He said that He would build His church, against which the gates of hell would have no effect.

Tens of millions of disenfranchised Christians, all with some kind of reason why they are that way. Something is very, very wrong with this picture brothers and sisters.

And what is equally disturbing is that so few even think this matters. I rarely if ever read about this on social media or forums, it just doesn't seem to be that important.

Perhaps the biggest issue is that the love of many has grown cold. People just don't want the hassle anymore, the hassle of being made uncomfortable by getting involved and loving one another in a way that often becomes messy and can hurt.

There is no other way. If we want to become active and vibrant members of His body, then it will involve great sacrifice and getting over ourselves and learning to love others regardless of how different they are and what they believe. Love covers a multitude of sins (faults) and so it is reasonable to suggest that if I am unwilling to form real life relationships with other believers in regular, ongoing fellowship, then perhaps it is because I just do not know how to get along with others (read: always getting offended and/or always wanting my own way and/or always wanting to be right or to be heard).

So these are my thoughts for tonight. In a nutshell I sense that the great departure of saints from active church involvement is directly related to our love for one another growing deathly cold.

In short, we need revival!!!

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2016/3/15 7:48

Awakened, good thoughts.

House churches must be real koinonia fellowships or they are no better than brick and mortar church in a box. Just smaller boxes.

When His people gather small, gather in homes, throwing off the yoke of what you call "traditional church", and living in Jesus' way and living out the NT life in the NT way, a change happens more deeply than the address. There is a quickening, a life-input from God. God is faithful to help His people in these meetings to be patient and merciful about those believers who do not yet or will never see.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 9:35

Brethren A.W. Tozer wrote a classic article entitled, "The Saint Must Walk Alone". Whereas Christian Fellowship is desirable. It is even encouraged. In the religious structure and environment of our day, Christ centered fellowship is often an impossibility for those of us that walk in the wilderness. Oftentimes fellowship is grabbed with fellow believers as you walk with them through the wilderness. Such Fellowship maybe for a Time. But it is welcome and it is a blessing. Such Tozer described in his classic article.

If I remember in my readings of Pilgrims Progress, Christian often got his fellowship with those he met along the journey. Primarily with the brother faithful. For many of us that travel in the wilderness. Our fellowship does come with those ones and twos we meet along the way.

Simply my thoughts.

Brother Blaine

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 12:33

I am sure there are lots and lots of reasons why 30 million Christians self identify as "dones" according to Josh Packard (Christian sociologist) who coined that term. He wrote a book called "Church Refugees" that was released last year. I have not read this book but have gleaned through many of the reasons (excuses?) that people give. Whatever they are and whatever ideas men come up with to explain this away, Jesus had this to say about the last days, just prior to His return:

"and because sin will increase, the love of many will grow cold".

This coldness has crept deep into the heart of every engine of society. We still maintain a level of civility but on a whole we just are not the same people we once were. Those who are in their 70s and 80s would be able to speak of days gone by when things were simpler and technology did not permeate every facet of our lives. Family life was warmer and people spent much quality time together. So were churches. Not so much anymore. Things are different now. Much has changed. A general frosting over of society has occurred and even the church has been affected.

The love of many has grown cold!!! IMHO, this is the overarching explanation why so many have left the American "Sunday morning experience" and the exact same reason why so few have any interest in doing much about it, including forming house churches. Maybe I'm wrong and if so please put me in my place, but I'll say it again...we need revival!!!

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2016/3/15 14:33

Quote:

-----I am sure there are lots and lots of reasons why 30 million Christians self identify as "dones"

I would guess that some of that number are border-line atheists and one's that are not fitting in morally with the Gospel or Church gatherings. Of course there is a significant number of saints that are finding it very hard to find any meaningful fellowship in evangelical churches as many services are not about Jesus Christ and devoid of His presence.

I personally would say that the reason for people leaving evangelical denominational churches is not usually: "and because sin will increase, the love of many will grow cold". But that exact warning is over the door of those who seek to threaten the Christian walk alone without brothers or sisters in the Lord. Of course love can grow cold in an Assembly like Ephesus. But it seems the Scriptures warn over and over again about being alone.

Jesus only had certain God-directed times He was alone. Otherwise He was surrounded day and night with His disciples. Paul the Apostle had a season of being alone with God to un-learn his religious ways. Some also need this but it is stretching Scriptures to say that all evangelicals leaving Churches need a pro-longed wilderness time. The apostles always worked together and Jesus sent out His disciples in two's. Rarely we see any "solo" Christianity in ministry or being alone in the New Covenant, but rather it was always together.

Many Bible promises in the New Testament cannot work if we are not with other fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. So there is a lot of credence in what brother Mark is sharing.

As one brother shared in this thread that house churches are very relational and demand a measure of fellowship.

We will not be able to make it alone in the end times especially, we will need brothers and sisters in the Lord. One brother stated here locally that our greatest asset in the body of Christ is each other.

We also need to have grace for each other as many of us have had times where we could not find like-minded fellowship and it was a journey until the Lord connected us with the right people and fellowship.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 14:50

Unlike man, God does not have a "herd mentality" and therefore is not trying to organize His Church in a physical way. Nimrod did this, religion does this but the Lord sees every member of His Church and is organically and spiritually connected to them. He knows where they are and He knows how to direct each member of His Church. We are in this world to do His will and thus we are all on a mission, that will not last long and then we are ushered into eternity. The Lord's goal is not to build large, comfortable fellowships but to send us forth to reach the lost. The Lord was a hardened spiritual warrior who "came to seek and to save that which was lost". He was a warrior with a soft heart towards the lost and He endured hardship from within and without. The apostles followed exactly in their Master's steps and we are called to do the same. There is only one verse in the Bible that speaks of "not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together". Stay balanced and don't get too hung up on that one verse to the point of self-condemnation. Get hung up on the will of God for your life which will bring you to meet many brothers and sisters through the years and sometimes you may not be around too many at all. There are different seasons in one's life.

Sometimes, I think we are too hung up today in trying to make the best possible house church thinking it must somehow be the panacea. Knowing how house churches are growing and knowing man, I have often been concerned about men wanting to organize all the house churches. Organic networks are fine and we should be relationally connected around Christ, but I sure hope no one tries to "organize" house churches with a central administration.

I recently came across "The Starfish Manifesto", by Wolfgang Simpson, have you read it? I am just in the early stages of it.

I notice there are many sites that talk about it, here is one I just found so you can get an intro. I know nothing about this site so keep that in mind.

<http://www.sethbarnes.com/?filename=get-the-starfish-manifesto-read-it>

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 16:35

I appreciate your points and understand what you are saying brother Julius. Personally I do not think that what the Lord wants has anything to do with buildings, large or small. Or movements or networks or organizations. But He is building a body, that is for certain. And He has been doing so for 2000 years. But what is a body if it is made up of disconnected members? It is not a body at all, but merely a pile of dismembered parts. That's quite a gross picture when you think about it.

I doubt anyone would have a problem with your first point that God knows who His sheep are and where and how to direct them, but this is speaking more to the universal worldwide and inter-age body of Christ. This thread from what I can tell is about local bodies. So to that point, how can the Lord build local bodies if each member chooses to remain alone?

As brother Greg and others point out, there are certainly going to be seasons that we walk alone and yes it can be very difficult to find a fellowship where it is all about Jesus, but I think there are many who have resigned themselves to remaining alone. And that is sad and tragic and I believe that many new believers will suffer and many yet to be saved unbelievers will suffer and be deprived as a result of those mature believers who choose to accept an independent Christian life.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 17:22

awakened,

This is a very good thread, by the way. T

The true Body is connected to Christ. We cannot all be connected to each other, physically. If one is truly connected to Christ which implies, submission, walking in love, and Christ's character and spirit is alive in them, then when the Lord brings one such person together with another, like-minded person, they instantly recognize Christ in each other. Jesus is what binds them together, not doctrine. So, the true Church of Jesus Christ is not dismembered in the least. We are all one in Him and when we meet each other, we recognize that oneness we both have. Look at it by faith and not with your physical eyes (not trying to be insulting, just encouraging you to see what already exists in Christ).

One who is truly connected to the Lord, is either always looking for like-minded people, or witnessing to the lost, or any number of other things connected to being about their Father's business.

Yes, there are many who are discouraged and have fallen into despondency and they love the Lord with all their heart, just weak and hurting and needing encouragement. We who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. You find them every once in awhile, in the grocery store, at flea markets, at work, etc, etc.

This world is totally against Christ and the religious world, with all of its programs, activities, agendas, conferences, works, etc., etc., ad nauseum is a poor substitute for true koinonia and brotherly love. Not that someone may not find it or does not have valuable relationships in the religious system. Some do have life giving, relationships centered on Christ. It is not the norm though, and I understand that many have resigned themselves that they will be alone. I don't think that is a good place to come to, because I think the Spirit of God is always prodding us to "encourage ourselves in Him" and look outside of ourselves to the eternal welfare of others. I do understand it, because I have been there, too. There are many that don't want to compromise or put themselves into a lukewarm religious environment because it is not good for them or their children and so they reason that being alone is better than being in such an environment.

This thread reminds me of Jeremiah 9. Jeremiah, seemed so despondent and discouraged with the "people of God", around him. He just wanted a few wayfaring men in the wilderness who were faithful to God. Just a few...not much...doesn't take much...

Jer 9:1 Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Jer 9:2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

Jer 9:3 And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

...even one good faithful Christian friend, changes everything.

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

Ecc 4:10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Ecc 4:11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Ecc 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

I have been in this situation several times through my life and I just had to lead someone to the Lord if I was going to have any fellowship at all. Who knows if I would have had that chance or made that opportunity if I was enjoying a good, home based fellowship? It seems when I was alone in the past, I would get out more and mingle with people and witness to them. The Lord scattered the saints in Jerusalem, didn't He?

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 18:17

Hi Julius,

I agree this is a very good thread, I would go so far as to say "vital" if we can see it?

You said, "The true Body is connected to Christ. We cannot all be connected to each other, physically."

Yes but He, the Lord Jesus is clever enough to figure out how we can each be connected to at least one other person on a regular ongoing basis. In community, submitted to Him and to each other. I don't believe that God will have ever been for any person to ever dwell alone but to be in a vital local body community, even if it is only with one or two others. Yet so many millions of believers in North America are apparently living below this. Some are quite happy to remain so but many others are wanting change.

So much of the new testament is written as instructions on how to love one another in community. It just doesn't make sense to attribute these instructions to merely loving one another in a general, worldwide body sense. For that is quite easy when you think about it. What takes dying to self and the fruit of the Spirit is to love one another in local community... which is exactly what Jesus lived out and taught...as did all the apostles.

On a personal note, I lived below this bar (for want of a better term)...many times in my life. And I hated it. I was meant to be a part of a local body and yet I was alone and everything within me cried out for more. I prayed along with my family for God to join us together in this city with other wholehearted believers who desired the same thing. And God heard us and did just that.

My hope is that others will be stirred to believe God to bring about change in their own circumstances too.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 18:45

I can't say it is not God's will for someone to dwell alone for a season. Paul went into Arabia for about 14 years, no doubt to search the scriptures and pray and allow the Lord to reveal the gospel to Him. God can and probably does call people away for a season.

But, you are talking about those who don't want to be with anyone else. If they know other believers exist and they don't want their fellowship, it certainly would make you wonder why. In that vein, I do agree with you. Something else is going on.

In Jerusalem God brought persecution to scatter the Church. This time, He may use persecution to bring the Church together.

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 19:34

We've got to do better than that...using Paul as an example for believers not fellowshiping with others is hardly a strong example from a very large subset lol. What about everybody else in the new testament, what about the apostles and the many thousands that came to know the Lord...that grew to become millions in just a few decades?

How many out of those millions were sent away by the Lord to be alone for 14 years (and went to third heaven on a side trip to boot).

Maybe one in a million:-)

First off Paul had just gotten saved after spending his every waking moment trying to kill the christians. How easily would it have been for him to be welcomed into their fellowships? Time had to pass before he could join them.

Secondly he was called as THE apostle to the gentiles. I hardly think any of the rank and file believers sitting at home in front of their computers and televisions in solitary christian living - qualify to use Pauls life as a comparative example as to why they are going it alone.

And finally, Paul after his 14 years alone set about to build the church and was always with at least one other person for the rest of his life, except when in prison of course. So, if we are going to use Pauls first 14 years as an example we had better be able to point to the example of the rest of his life as well.

Just to be fair:-)

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 21:15

Awakened,

I was thinking out loud in my first paragraph. Did you read the second one?

Paul wasn't in the desert because he did not want to be with people. One thing that Paul was able to discern was who the false brethren were. I would say there are a lot more false than true brethren. Anyway, I don't think you will be able to draw broad brush strokes for 20-30 million Christians. How does anyone even know how many Christians don't have any source of fellowship?

Re: - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2016/3/15 22:07

Quote:
-----So much of the new testament is written as instructions on how to love one another in community. It just doesn't make sense to attribute these instructions to merely loving one another in a general, worldwide body sense. For that is quite easy when you think about it. What takes dying to self and the fruit of the Spirit is to love one another in local community...which is exactly what Jesus lived out and taught...as did all the apostles.

Amen, this is well said! I'm reminded of Peters instructions;

But the end of all things is at hand: therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins. (I Peter 4:7-8)

Above all, he says, that means it's most important and I agree that it's not just about a general love, but a love among the saints that casts out fear. And as Art Katz would say, it's far beyond a saccharin back-slap and a bear-hug, it's serving one another in humility.

So also John agrees;

He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now. (I John 2:9)

That word 'hates' means to 'love less'. Are we loving to the full? It sure is easy and common to find fault among any church members, but are we burdened with love and tears when we find it?

These things apply whether you're in a house church or a traditional church.

In Christ,

Re: , on: 2016/3/15 22:33

Very nice. Those things apply because "we are the Church", regardless of what roof we are under.

Re: , on: 2016/3/16 1:03

"I was thinking out loud in my first paragraph. Did you read the second one?"

Sorry brother Julius I got carried away with my myself lol. Yes it is a tragedy that so many believers choose to remain by themselves. And I think it is clear that in the 21st century one can assume that other wholehearted believers are EVERY WHERE. It comes down to what we think is important...what really matters to us? There is an old saying that we have about those who live a sinful lifestyle and are not ready to give it up..."I guess they have not hit rock bottom yet". Perhaps the same can be said of so many who are content to live a solitary christian life? They haven't quite hit rock bottom yet, not quite desperate enough yet to seek out others with whom they can fellowship?

Re: , on: 2016/3/16 1:20

"Above all, he says, that means it's most important and I agree that it's not just about a general love, but a love among the saints that casts out fear. And as Art Katz would say, it's far beyond a saccharin back-slap and a bear-hug, it's serving one another in humility."

Yes amen brother Ron...this is so important and the very thing that weighs on my heart continually. Is this not part of at least what Paul was referring to when he said that the equipping of the saints was for the "work of the ministry" (Eph 4). Paul also tells us that we are members of one another, just as each body part is part of the whole. Not a single part of our body can make the ludicrous suggestion that they have no need for some other part in the body. Every single part of the body needs every other part of the body. If one part is missing or not working properly (unhealthy/diseased) this causes the whole body to feel out of place and sick. Paul is speaking about this in 1 Cor 12 and the point he ends up making is this:

"So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad."

Clearly Paul is speaking about a local church situation where members care for one another.

So putting Eph 4 together with 1 Cor 12 we see God's plan to equip His people to do the work of the ministry which is to care for one another just as each part of the human body takes care of the whole.

This is why this thread is so vital. Many, many believers are isolated and alone and missing out on so much that God wants to do in them and through them, but He is unable to because even though they are a part of the world wide body of Christ, they are body parts "separated" from the local body of Christ.

Re: , on: 2016/3/16 12:56

Quote:
-----by awakened on 2016/3/16 1:20:03
Every single part of the body needs every other part of the body. If one part is missing or not working properly (unhealthy/diseased) this causes the whole body to feel out of place and sick. Paul is speaking about this in 1 Cor 12 and the point he ends up making is this:

Every single part of the body needs to be "holding fast to the Head", Jesus Christ. This may be the root of the problem and I think this thread may only be dealing with a symptom. We are not going to "hold fast" to one another if we are not first maintaining our hold on Jesus Christ.

Quote:
-----This is why this thread is so vital. Many, many believers are isolated and alone and missing out on so much that God wants to do in them and through them, but He is unable to because even though they are a part of the world wide body of Christ, they are body parts "separated" from the local body of Christ.

The most vital thing is to abide in Him, hold fast to Christ, because He is our life. Everything else that is eternal and blessed emanates from our life in and with Christ. The emphasis should never be put on what we DO FOR HIM or WHAT HE DOES THROUGH US. That is not why we have value before the Lord. The Lord is not interested in how much we do, or how much we give. He is interested in us knowing Him and trusting Him. His will, will only be perfected in and through us, to the degree that we know, love and trust Him.

Re: , on: 2016/3/16 16:57

"Every single part of the body needs to be "holding fast to the Head", Jesus Christ. This may be the root of the problem and I think this thread may only be dealing with a symptom."

Agreed brother...holding fast to the Head and abiding in Him goes without saying...amen!

I believe that the topic of every believer finding their place in a local body of believers is important and vital for spiritual growth and should not be undermined. I certainly would suggest such a thing to brand new believers but in most cases this is not even necessary because most of the time it just comes naturally. The new believers that I personally fellowship with are so eager to meet with their brothers and sisters that they would meet every night if it was practical. Interestingly this is not the case with many who have been "in the Way" for some time:-)

And I also agree with you that this great falling away from local fellowships is the symptom of the much bigger problem... that many are no longer abiding in Christ, not holding fast to the Head. Jesus is no longer the first love of the majority of believers and so it is not a huge surprise when we hear of these statistics.

Re: , on: 2016/3/16 19:04

Quote:

-----by awakened on 2016/3/16 16:57:07

"Every single part of the body needs to be "holding fast to the Head", Jesus Christ. This may be the root of the problem and I think this thread may only be dealing with a symptom."

Agreed brother...holding fast to the Head and abiding in Him goes without saying...amen!

Well, you would think being friends with other Believers would go without saying, too. We are either friends of the Lord and His people or friends of the world.

But, I still think there are many that are finding it difficult to locate true "friends" of the Lord. I have had that problem in the past and I am sure you have, too.