

Responding to COVID 19 as the Church “Scattered” Rather Than the Church “Gathered”

For years in our western culture we have gathered in a building to have church services. Our focus has been on buildings, budgets and butts in the seats. **How has that been working for us?**

Not very well. Eighty-five percent of the churches in America are in decline while at the same time God has brought the world to us and our population as a nation has soared!

What is wrong with this picture? We have canonized this as the model to follow and everyone, laity, clergy and even missionaries aspire to the idea that “bigger is better.”

But where do we find that in the New Testament? The Acts of the Apostles begins with 3,000 new believers on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Acts 2: 46 (CSB) tells us, “Everyday they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house.”

Even in the middle of this pandemic we can still do both! We can “gather” online and we can “scatter” in our homes and actually “be” the church!

As the Acts of the Apostles closes in Acts 28: 30 -31 (CSB) we see that “Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house. And he welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.” The gospel is a sweeping movement described as “unhindered.”

Where am I going with this? Paul was in his home for two years. Our government is only asking for eight weeks! Could it be that God is causing His Church to **refocus** on people and not property as we **respond** to the COVID-19 virus?

Our beautiful buildings sit unoccupied, empty and here we are still paying mortgages and utilities. Yes, they have been a tool that God has allowed us to use in the past. **But have you thought about the new reality that what got us to where we are, won’t take us where we need to be?**

While our properties are unoccupied, God’s people are back in homes scattered across multiple neighborhoods filled with people who don’t attend church.

Now is the time to ramp up our small group emphasis, the average group dynamic is 8-10. Imagine that! The same number that our government has established as the maximum number of people who can assemble.

I conducted the Men’s Bible Study that I lead every Wednesday via Zoom. Over the last 6 weeks when we gathered at the church, we had six in attendance. Last night we still had 6 men online!

How can you and I join this new reality and move to being the church “scattered”?

Here’s some options:

- a. Check on your neighbors and friends and invite them over to your house to watch your church services on that wide screen tv that you bought for watching sports and entertainment, now you can use it for worship!

- b. Pray for your friends and neighbors.
- c. Go out of your way to meet someone else's need rather than bemoaning the fact that you can't gather and hide in the large group in the big building.
- d. Find something for the children and teens to do. Tons of options are at www.lifeway.com and also www.rightnowmedia.org
- e. Discuss the Pastor's message and its implications to you in your context with those that are gathered. Another choice is to choose a curriculum that touches the needs of those in attendance. Ask yourself, what needs do they have in common?

Maybe, just maybe since we are being asked to **stop going to church**, we can **start being the church** and become the church scattered once again! God help us during this time to Be the Church of the Living God!

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