

I had a request to address this subject and I thought given the severity of our worldwide pandemic it would be useful to comment on it.

The subject is the idea that we must meet in our congregational setting even though due to the health issues this would not be prudent. I know that there are some that are adamant that we must meet face-to-face with our spiritual brothers and sisters. They generally base that position on a comment made in Hebrews 10. **“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”** (KJV) or **“not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing”** (NIV)

The writer of Hebrews likely penned his letter around 68 AD to a Jewish audience. At that time there was only face-to-face assembling of a congregation or group, hence the wording “forsaking assembling” or “giving up meeting” {other translations give similar meanings}. Evidently during this period there were some that didn’t attend synagogue or other meetings.

All of this lends credence to the idea that we should not close our churches. But let’s remember that we have many ways to stay connected with our brethren that they did not have in 68 AD. We have our phones, Internet, email, zoom, Facebook, etc. etc.

Further, let’s look at this in context and we might find that the writer could have been addressing a larger issue.

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider **how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 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.*** Heb 10:23-25 (NIV)

It seems that the writer is talking about having love for each other and making the necessary contact to encourage each other to stay the course. Without the contact with other believers is it easy to fall back into a life of sin. The world we live in is steeped in sinful attitudes and actions, and if that is all that we are in contact with it is no wonder that we can lose our direction and fall into the world’s way of living.

We are blessed in this day and age by having so many ways that we can be in contact with each other. While face-to-face contact is preferable for most of us (and a hug is always welcome), it is not the only way we can be in direct communication with each other. It takes a more concerted effort on our part, in this time of the pandemic, but we have the tools to do so.

Looking at “meeting in person” from another position we can see that in our situation today we would not be following Jesus’ prime directive.

*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’.* Mat 22:37-39 (NIV)

In Jesus’ world love is above all the commands of the Torah (Law). There is not one command or one law that cannot be broken in order to love your neighbor. He said; *All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*” v.40

Now it seems that if one loves his neighbor, he will not put them at risk of contracting a deadly virus. With this Covid19 virus no one can be absolutely sure that they don’t have the virus but are not showing symptoms yet. Therefore any contact has the possibility of passing the virus to one’s neighbor. Even with a mask and 6 feet of distance there is a potential danger, even if it is very small. **Love does not take the chance.**

Even more important is our love for God. From this perspective we need to remember that everyone is a Child of God. Are we willing to put one of His children at risk and potentially cause that person’s death? If we love God then there should be no extreme that we would not go to in order to protect one of His children.

*The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not covet,” and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **Love does no harm to a neighbor.** Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* Romans 13:9-10 (NIV)