

## **We Are Better Together**

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God made humans to be social creatures. After making Adam, God said, "...It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18). God made a woman, a fully grown female: Eve. She was a wife, companion, and helper to Adam. Alone, Adam was incomplete. Adam and Eve were better together.

Solomon once observed how humans are better together. He wrote, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4:9-12).

Togetherness has physiological and sociological benefits. Togetherness aids the individual and the group. We are better together. This is not an opinion. Rather, this is a recognition of how the Bible explains human nature. As Christians, this principle of togetherness must shape our understanding of the local church.

Many people today have an individualistic perspective of the local church. For some, the local church is where they go to meet an obligation and or receive what they think they need. Some attend worship to take the Lord's Supper. Some attend to receive encouragement from the sermon. While these are important aspects of our participation in the local church, an individualistic perspective fails to consider how the individual relates to the church.

An individualistic perspective is harmful to both the individual and the church. Christians who do not actively participate in the local church do not properly support their fellow Christians. Christians who attend worship for themselves do not adequately derive the support they need from their fellow Christians. Christians who are closed off to their fellow Christians have attitude problems that urgently need improvement. In the remaining article, consider how the Bible explains togetherness.

**1. Worshipping together.** The New Testament documents Christians who gathered for worship together. They did not obey the Gospel and go their separate ways. Instead, those bonded by their like precious faith worshipped together.

In Jerusalem, Peter and John were arrested by the Sanhedrin Council. After conferring among themselves, they realized they could not keep them. Peter and John were released. They went back to the church and worshipped: "When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God..." (Acts 4:23-24).

When Christians gather together for worship, they share in mutual edification. For example, Paul wrote to the saints in Rome about his desire to be “mutually encouraged” by their faith and his (Rom. 1:12). Properly worshipping together involves each Christian offering something to the worship. Christians with an individualistic perspective cannot worship properly.

Edification is the promotion of spiritual growth. This is the process by which our faith is strengthened. Mutual edification requires two or more encourage together. It involves giving and receiving in worship and requires hearts that are open to one another. If our hearts are closed to one another, while we may be in the same room, we are not worshipping together.

**2. Striving together.** Paul had a close bond with the church at Philippi. He had initially taught them the Gospel. They did all they could to support his preaching. In his letter to the church, Paul wrote that they needed to strive together for the faith of the Gospel (Phil. 1:27).

Striving together describes the collective effort Christians are to make together to promote the Gospel. Advancing the Gospel is challenging. Paul recognized that the Gospel had opponents in Philippi (Phil. 1:28). Instead of being silenced by fear, they were to find courage by doing the work together. By a united front, they could make progress for the Gospel by persuading people in Philippi to obey. They were better together.

Like the church at Philippi, we too have a responsibility to promote the Gospel. This work remains challenging; yet, we can find support from one another in this effort. When we are united in love for Christ, one another, and unbelievers, we will be effective in our goal. We are better together.

**3. Following together.** Being a Christian is about experiencing a new birth by water and the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). Being a Christian is about becoming a renewed person after the character of Jesus. Being a Christian is about a new way of life and new goals and aspirations.

While we tend to want things that are new, new typically brings challenges. Whether we get a new job, move to a new place, or begin a new marriage, engaging with something new requires education and the incorporation of new behaviors. This is especially true of becoming a Christian. We must learn about our new life and adopt new attitudes and behaviors. This can be difficult; yet, we can be aided in this process by the help of other Christians.

Paul told the church at Philippi to be followers together of him (Phil. 3:17). As a follower of Jesus, Paul modeled the life of a seasoned Christian. We can learn by example. While Jesus is our ultimate example, we can follow His example together, helping each other along the way. We can pray together. We can share in each other’s experiences. We are better together.

### **Conclusion**

How do you relate to the local church? Do you attend to meet an obligation? Do you come each week expecting to be given something? Are you closed off to certain members of the

church? If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you are being weakened bit by bit. And, so too is the local church.

An individualistic perspective will blind us from seeing ourselves as God has made us. He has made us to experience fullness and wholeness through relationships. We are better together.