

Romans 1:11-12

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

For the job I do, I normally travel to other states and live there for anywhere from 6 months to 3 years. But for the last two years, I have been working from home. It was a client preference, and now with Covid, I think it will be more of the norm.

But I remember when I worked in Florida for 3 years, I attended a church there that I loved, and established some close friendships in the church while I was there. I remember after I left I would go to another church wherever I was working. But I would still watch the Florida church online in, sometimes it was all I could do to hold back the tears, because I missed being there, worshipping the Lord and learning with my church family.

But now I have been in a new church that I am a part of where I live for almost two years. But when Covid first hit, all they were doing was online church for at least a month, but soon it opened back up with the option for people to attend or watch online. When we could not go to church, I could echo today's verse, which are the words of Paul *For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established-- that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.*

But I know through these experiences that online church is not the way, nor is it what the bible teaches. Now I do know there are the exceptions, like when my mom was alive, she literally could not attend church because of her physical and health conditions (before Covid), so she would always watch online, and even now, there are those with health issues or their age just makes it to dangerous because of Covid.

But through all of this, I have come to realize (and hopefully you have to) that church is more than just listening to your pastor teach or people worshipping the Lord together. Church is doing life together. It's laughing with each other and crying with one another. It's talking and sharing and praying together and encouraging one another and giving good godly counsel to each other. It's looking into someone's eyes and knowing that something just isn't right and being there for him or her. None of that works watching church online.

For me, I couldn't wait to get back to church, But for so many others, there was the scare at first because of Covid, But over time, I think for some it's become an excuse. I mean hey, you can sleep in longer on Sunday. You don't have to deal with getting the kids ready. No parking or driving and no getting dressed up, and when church is over, close the computer and flip the TV

on and veg out. Sounds great, but if you think about it, all of that is about self, which a Christian is never about.

Today's Devo is not a guilt teaching, but more of a reality or a heart check. Are you using Covid as an excuse for not going and being a part of the church and just doing it all online now? This is something between you and the Lord, and He is the only one you need to be honest with about this.

I go to church because I love church. I love the people, the fellowship. Hanging with the people I will be hanging out with in heaven for all eternity. So since I love it and the people so much, I have no fear in going to church, because the bible says that:

† **1 John 4:18** *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.*

What about you, are you ready to get back in there and encourage others and be encouraged yourself?

† **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT2)** *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*