

The GATHERING

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb 10:22-25)

THE EXHORTATION!

I believe the Bible has given us clear instruction for the days we live in. As we have gone through trying times with global pandemic we have witnessed the affects that these times have had on the church, specifically on our responsibilities and commitment to church fellowship, perhaps even to the point of ***'forsaking the assembling'***.

Jesus wasn't ignorant of these times. He spoke of the times of the end in Matthew 24 saying that ***the love of many would grow cold.***

The passage above from Hebrews chapter 10 is a word for us to consider for the times we live in, something we are encouraged to protect ***'so much more as you see the Day approaching'***.

The main exhortation: **Instead of scattering we should be *gathering*** ('assembling').

The only other time this word is used in the NT is in reference to the rapture of the church (***Our 'gathering' together to Him 2 Thes 2:1***).

So it appears our ***gathering together*** has significance and is precious in the eyes of God and is to be protected.

WHAT'S THE FOCUS?

The key words of the passage are:

'Consider one another', 'stir up love & good works', 'exhorting one another'

Practically this seems to translate to the idea of a strong community.

To ***consider one another*** is to care for one another.

Galatians says:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2 NKJV)

This could perhaps translate to us having honest conversations and fellowship. Where needs are known, prayed for, provided for.

To ***Stir up love and good works*** speaks of an environment where the whole church body is involved. *Speaking of a mutual activity, one in which believers encourage one another, not one where leaders direct the rest as to what they are to do." (Morris)*

“Love needs stimulation and society. Faith and hope can be practiced by a solitary, in a hermit’s cell or on a desert island. But the exercise of love is possible only in a community.”
(Robinson)

To **exhort one another** is to invite accountability of our lives and actions.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

WHAT WOULD THIS TYPE OF FELLOWSHIP LOOK LIKE PRACTICALLY?

After prayerful consideration I believe this would be a gathering where **participation is encouraged**.

There would be a general format but not a strict set of rules around the format.

An environment where there is a heart to seek God moving upon His people.

BASIC FORMAT

Worship Circle	Some acoustic songs to help us set our eyes upon God. Gaps for people to speak out words of praise to God.
Small Teaching/Devotion	Not a technical study but a devotional focused on the words of Jesus for us.
Testimony Time	Open floor to share testimony. Perhaps even someone’s actual testimony of salvation.
Prayer Groups	Breaking up into smaller groups to pray where people may feel more confident praying out loud and sharing their needs.
Fellowship	Providing an atmosphere of healthy conversation.

FREQUENCY & LOCATION

Aim would be for monthly meetings. Location depends on season and availability, but the goal is to move around the greater area of Christchurch.

SOME GUIDELINES

- **Don’t come with a critical spirit.**
Someone with a critical spirit is prone to complaining, seeing the glass as half-empty, ruing unmet expectations, sensing failure (in others more than in oneself), and being judgmental. Critical spirits are no fun to be around; neither are they fun to possess. – From Got Questions
- **Don’t quench the spirit.** Allow God’s Spirit to move!
When the word “quench” is used in Scripture, it is speaking of suppressing fire. The Holy Spirit is a fire dwelling in each believer. He wants to express Himself in our actions and attitudes. When believers do not allow the Spirit to be seen in our actions or we do what we know is wrong, we suppress or quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We do not allow the Spirit to reveal Himself the way that He wants to.
- **Don’t look for what’s wrong but contribute to good.**
- **Don’t make it about ‘you’. Come to worship God and serve others.**
- **Try avoid unedifying conversation.** In our current time it’s easy to focus on what’s bad, and to always be on the topic of Covid. We really need some time at the feet of Jesus.