

Wednesday Encouragement

I remember one of the worst summers of my life like it was yesterday. It was while I was still in college and I was working as a part time youth minister at a church that was maybe 30 minutes away from my college campus. I was nervous going into summer, because I knew that the church would obviously want me to stay over the summer to keep working. To be completely honest, I was not looking forward to that. I knew that staying over the summer would mean I wouldn't get to be home with my family or friends from Indiana, and that I also wouldn't get to see any of my college friends either because they were all traveling for camp ministry or back home. Someone in the church owned some property people used to camp on, and he had a nice trailer on the property that he offered for me to stay in.

While it was a genuinely nice offer and the trailer was nice, I was dreading it. There were a lot of things that made that summer a bad experience for me, but the biggest issue for me was that I stayed alone in a trailer that was 20 minutes from the town my church was in and probably 30 minutes from my college campus. I remember there were a few weeks at the start of summer when my friends were on campus doing training before they left for their camps. I spent as much time on campus as possible, hanging out with them any chance I got. Unfortunately, I hadn't developed a lot of relationships at the church, and, with most of my friends gone from campus and my family states away, I spent a lot of that summer alone. I do enjoy alone time without a doubt, but it was not good for me to spend that much time by myself.

God did not create us to be alone. We can see that right from the beginning. After God created man, He says this in Genesis 2:18: The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." God knows that we need other people in our lives, it is how He created us.

It has been almost a year now since we have started this period of increased isolation and being unable to gather as we wish. While it is ultimately for the best and for everyone's safety, it still doesn't mean that it's always easy. I'm sure you've heard it a thousand times by now, but I continue to be so thankful for our church family and being able to stay connected. It can become easy to let church become an afterthought and stay disconnected these days, but it is so important for all of us to not let that happen.

In his book *A Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren says, "we are called to belong, not just believe." Though the local church is made up of imperfect people, we are still the body of Christ and created to be a part of it. We aren't meant to be alone in our walk with Christ, and we also aren't meant to just be passive observers attending church. We are called to be involved in the ministry of the church, called to encourage one another, help one another and love one another.

Ephesians 4:15-16 says, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

With Christ leading us, we as the body are to grow and support each other, speaking the truth in love. We all are important parts of the body and have a role to play, and each of us is needed. We say it often, but please know that if you need anything, we are here to help each other and support each other. We may be in a time right now where staying physically distant is the best option, but don't let yourself become disconnected from the body.

Gavin Krueger

