**YOU ARE NOT THE CHURCH**

If we understand the meaning of the word ‘church’ we could never presume that we alone are the church. That idea is contrary to the origin of the word (ekklesia, meaning “assembly”). In fact, that word has secular origins. It literally means an assembly of people who have been called together by an authority in the city or region. Wow! That sheds a lot of light on what the church is. The church is an assembly of people organized under defined governmental leadership. It’s a regular gathering of people who are deeply agreed and in pursuit of mission advanced under God’s apostles, prophets and other governmental leaders. Further, the pure definition of the word reveals that it isn’t used as easily in the context of the global company of believers as it is in the regional and local gathering of believers. The definition reveals that it’s a well defined local group vs. a loosely defined larger group of people (who mostly don’t know each other at all). We can’t be a part of the church if we aren’t gathered together with other parts of the church. Church is corporate. Additionally, the church is a group of people who assemble, fellowship, pray and respond together to apostolic teaching. That can’t happen in a more nebulous global context. The church has inherent in it’s core call the expectation of assembly and a corporate response so as to ensure the local mission is fulfilled. Again, a fulfilled mission can’t be realized without this type of intentional and faithful participation at a local level where communication and commonality are clearly defined.

**WHAT ABOUT HAVING CHURCH ONLINE?**

I agree that there is much to enjoy and gain from this amazing technological world. We can watch church services online (I was watching one myself just tonight), listen to worship, meet Christians in forums and on Facebook, pray for one another and involve ourselves in Kingdom business in very unique ways. It’s a new wineskin. But, if there is no true local gathering with clear leadership, some key issues come into play:

1. **DEVOID OF APOSTOLIC LEADERSHIP—**There is most probably (there are exceptions) no clearly defined apostolic leadership involved. We have to know who we’re called to serve with. We have to all hear, together, in our local congregation, how we are to respond in mission advance. What’s God calling our leaders to focus on? How are we to participate? What are the goals? What steps must we take to prepare ourselves to see this come to pass?
2. **LACK OF STRATEGIC CORPORATE INTERCESSION—**While not impossible, it’s very hard to involve ourselves in the number one purpose of the church this way—corporate intercession. We just have to be together to pray with unity and consistency if we are to have the sufficient strength to see significant impact.
3. **NO ACCOUNTABILITY—**Accountability and discipline are nearly non-existent outside of the context of the local church. Most who flock from the church and into alternative spiritual activities do so to avoid conflict, accountability and correction from leadership. We have to understand that this is a critical part of the refining process. We must be receptive and humble and ready to be challenged—even if the leaders God established for us are exceptionally flawed and out of touch with our needs.
4. **PROMOTES MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH—**It can quite easily reinforce a wrong understanding of the purpose of the church. I would say this is the most serious issue. The prevailing thought these days is that the church is there for us. Whatever needs we have, we can get many of them met in the church. So, we attend if we are ministered to. Or, we may determine that we can get what we’re looking for without regular church attendance. So, the church becomes unnecessary to us. Friend, this concept is a defilement of the church. I can’t say it any less striking than that. We are called to gather together with other believers primarily to intercede for the nations. We are there to give, to leave offerings, to serve, to minister, to pray, to grow. The church isn’t primarily there for us, we are to be there for the mission of the church. We may say that we don’t need the church but have we considered that the church needs us?

I believe the scattering movement is one of the enemy’s most urgent assaults in these end-times. He knows the power of unified togetherness. He used that very strategy when attempting to build a tower to Heaven. God himself said that Satan’s successful plan of unity would actually succeed if scattering didn’t happen! Now, when the church must be together continually as we advance against the kingdom of darkness, Satan has every intention of pulling people out of that mission. The scattering and loose commitment to God’s method of prayer-driven Kingdom advance is resulting in an weak and impotent army. In a day when less than two services a month equates to ‘normal’ church attendance, I believe we must see the 24/7 church advance in strength, unity, commitment and power. Instead of two services a month, I believe we’ll see it become normal to be in church 20+ times a month as we pray together, receive apostolic instruction, move out in ministry and take the fire of the Holy Spirit to the world—together.-John B-credit