



ENCOURAGED TOGETHER

Banning Liebscher

Sunday Message



Teaching

Text:

(NKJV) Romans 1:8-13

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— 12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. 13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

recap.

This week Banning Liebscher continues a teaching series focusing on the theology and necessity of the local church. Contrary to current popular opinion, the future of the church is not online. It makes a great front porch but a bad house to take up residence in. There are many Christians who disagree with this view but it is an important conversation that our church must engage in.

There is a cultural lie that has been fed to us and it is a lie that has crept into the church. The lie is: you can have depth of relation-

ship and connection from a distance. As a result, we are seeing a generation that is internally conflicted about this. They don't believe this to be true with family gatherings, concerts, sporting events, coffee with friends, dates with significant others but somehow they feel they can have a meaningful church life from a distance.

We should be looking closely at what church does look like in this culture, but that will require us to be honest about some things. The statistics regarding the effects of social media, and a world that is lived online, are alarming. A recent poll asked a variety of questions regarding social media. In response to the statement "life was better before social media", 64% said "yes", and 53% of those were Gen Z. There is an awareness that online interactions have not made our lives better. In fact, many people would say the world is more divided and people are more discontent, lonely, isolated and depressed. And yet, we seem to be redefining what church should be.

In the teaching text Paul is writing to the Romans and there is an urgency, a longing in his language because he doesn't want to be distant from them. He wants to be together in person. A letter simply will not do. Paul understood that there are things that happen when we gather that don't happen when we are apart. That is simply how God designed us.

There is power when the people of God gather together. There are definitely some things that you can only get when you are one-on-one with Jesus. But there is also something that God does when His people gather together. Throughout Scripture we see this. In the New Testament they would gather together in homes to pray together.

Ultimately, Paul is saying to the Romans: "When my life comes in contact with your life, something happens." We get into church to feed off the faith and hope of others. There are times when we need to allow our community to do the heavy lifting for us. There is power when the people of God agree for something to happen.



Discussion Guide

Emotional Health Check In:

Take a few minutes to do an emotional health check in with your Life on Life group, creating space for each person to answer the question below:

In 7 words or less, what would vbe helpful to hear God (or someone close) say to you this week?

If the need arises, spend a few minutes praying for one another, asking God to meet needs and help each person carry what feels heavy right now.

ENGAGE

What is your personal opinion regarding the future of the church?

What has been your experience with building relationships and community within the church? Do you believe you can find depth of connection and relationship through an online community?

How have you been affected by social media and a predominantly online community? In what ways have you experienced the power of God through gathering with others?

ENCOUNTER

Spend a few minutes in stillness and quiet (you may want to play soaking music) in your group and ask the Holy Spirit the following question:

Holy Spirit, are there any lies that I am believing that are preventing me from fully engaging with the church? Please unveil those lies now and show me where they originated. Highlight Your truth and tell me what You think about Your church.

If time permits, allow those who want to, to share what God spoke to them during the encounter time.

EQUIP

Fast from social media for an amount of time that feels comfortable to you (ask Holy Spirit). Pay attention to how you are affected by the fast. Does your mood improve? What are you filling your time with? Are your relationships strengthened by having to engage in real-life conversations?



REVIVAL IS COMING. REVIVAL IS HERE.

