

# I Don't Have to Go to Church - 2

by Anton Bosch

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*We need to be part of a church to reach our full potential as believers and to have our spiritual lives strengthened.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 27:17, Luke 22:15, Acts 2:1, 1 Peter 5:8

**Topics:** "Church Fellowship", "Christian Community"

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## Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of fellowship within the church for believers to reach their full potential, highlighting the need for face-to-face interaction over virtual connections. He explains that just as Jesus desired fellowship with His disciples despite their flaws, believers also need the support and protection that comes from being with other believers. Bosch stresses that it is through the often challenging interactions with fellow Christians that individuals are shaped into the image of Christ, learning patience, grace, forgiveness, and love. He warns against isolation and the dangers of drifting into deception without the accountability and confirmation found in a healthy church community.

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## Transcript

Not only does the Lord meet our needs through the church, but it is only in the context of the church that we can reach our full potential as believers.

As a member of the human race we are created as social beings. We need the friendship, fellowship and sense of belonging that comes from being part of a family, a tribe and a nation. Only those who are dysfunctional do not need interaction with others. As a Christians we belong to the tribe of the local church and the nation of God's people. But for some strange reason many Christians find that they have more in common with their unsaved colleagues, the country club or the patrons of the local pub than with the church. Instead of those relationships strengthening their spiritual life, they rather foster the life of the flesh and corrupt the life of the spirit. But worse, could be a sad statement of where we really belong.

Your worldly friends cannot build you up spiritually and it is guaranteed that they will gradually but steadily, pull you down to their level. Isolation is also not a good alternative since we all need to relate to others. So the only option for the true believer is to be in fellowship with other believers. This cannot be "virtual fellowship" it has to be face-to-face fellowship. I speak to my daughters on the telephone almost every day, but it is not remotely the same as seeing them and holding them in the flesh. No computer, telephone or video-conference can replace being in the same place with other believers. It is interesting that the Scriptures record that "they were all with one accord in one place." (Acts 2:1). Watching television or the

internet does not put you in one place and it is a lie that the warmth of fellowship can flow through your hand on the idiot box.

Jesus had perfect fellowship with His Father. Yet He often sought the company of His disciples in spite of their failures and weakness. When it came to His last meal Jesus said: "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15-16). The word translated here as "fervent desire" is mostly translated as "lust". Jesus was driven by an all-consuming passion and deep hunger for fellowship with the twelve; even though one had already sold Him and the rest would all flee from the Cross. (Except for John). If Jesus needed fellowship, then you and I need fellowship much more, even though we think that we are more spiritual than other believers.

We need the safety and protection that comes from being with other believers. In the wild, lions have no chance against a whole herd of buffalo, but if they can isolate one from the rest, then they will be able to kill it. So "the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1Peter 5:8). We are relatively safe in the body, but the moment we are out on our own, we become fair game. It is exactly for this reason that Satan sows discord amongst the brethren. Once he has driven his wedge home and isolated brother from brother, they become easy pickings.

We need to spend time with other believers in order to become like Jesus! Wait just one minute before you accuse me of heresy. How does He shape us into His image? Does He inject us with His likeness? Do we suddenly wake up one day with a different personality? No. He changes us through His Word and through the church. There is just no substitute for the often painful experiences of having to endure other Christians in order to shape us into the image of Christ! Yes, it is the hard and unpleasant interactions that do more to shape us than anything else. "As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). When I make a knife out of a piece of steel, I do not use feathers to shape that steel. Only things that are harder than the iron will shape it. Even so, people are mostly shaped by those painful interactions that leave an impression.

I am not advocating any kind of uncharitable or inconsiderate behavior in the church. In fact, I get very frustrated with believers who are self-centered and not courteous. But, the fact is that we only learn to be patient when we have to put up with the stupidity of others. We only learn how gracious God has been to us when we see our vices in others. We only learn how big the Lord's grace and patience is when we have to put up with others who are slow to change. It is only when we are faced with the obnoxious, that we learn how to love the unlovely. It is only when we struggle to forgive others that we understand His forgiveness. While we all want to be part of a church where everybody is exactly like Jesus, the fact is, the less the church is like Him, the more we learn to be like Him!

We also need the church in order to have His Word confirmed. Every believer must read the Bible and expect the Lord to address them, personally, through His Word. But we also need confirmation of what He is "saying" to us. That confirmation cannot come through randomly stabbing your finger at the Bible pages or flipping the Book open and hoping that something will pop out at you. Confirmation of the Lord's direction comes through the life of the church. It may be through the preaching of the Word or through a comment of another believer. Too many people claim to have "heard God's voice" in their closet when it is evident that God is clearly trying to say something different.

Over the years I have watched many who once held orthodox doctrine drift off into some deception or the other. This cannot possibly happen as long as we are part of a healthy church and in submission to one another. But the moment we think that we do not need others (even though remaining "in fellowship"), we are open to error since we no longer submit to the checks and balances of true fellowship. No one should form or change his theology in isolation - it should only happen in the context of fellowship.

I'm sorry if my ramblings have angered you, especially if you are so spiritual that you have outgrown the church. But then, I am only writing to those who are weak - like myself.

(To be continued)

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