

I Love My Church

Community

Hebrews 10:19-25

This week I want to talk to you about what the Bible says about your involvement in community.

When Dana and I bought our house one of the must haves was a fenced in back yard. Do you notice there is sometimes a BIG difference between the front yard and the back yard? The front yard is kept nice. The grass is always cut nice, the flower beds have mulch in them and the hedges were cut just right.

The back yard on the other hand is where all the kids' toys are and the dog has put well placed landmines all over the place. The grass gets cut every other week and the shed needs painted. This is the back yard.

The fence is the separation between the two places. It is the barrier between the front, which everyone was allowed to see, and the back, which is where we live.

So what do fences and yards have to do with community? Let's look at Hebrews 10:19-25

Before I unpack this, let's go back to our fence. Let's picture our lives as a yard. If we were honest this morning we would admit that we like a good fence. We are comfortable with showing people our front yard. Its nicely mowed and taken care of. I don't want you to see the back yard because you might step in something.

The back yard is private, it's who we are. And getting in there is by invite only.

Here is the thing about fences, God isn't a big fan of them. If we are going to have a true relationship with God and true community with each other, then we need to rethink our fences.

If we intend to love our church the way God wants us to, then we have to:

- 1. Know that Jesus crashed the fence.** Before we even talk about the fence that we put up between us and people, we have to realize the barrier that exists between God and us. (Verse 19-22)

- The author is talking about the fact that because of Jesus we now have a way to come back to God. (Grab the sledge hammer) Jesus knocked down the wall that separated us from himself so that we could experience true communion with him. **NO MORE FENCES!!** (show the video)
- Even though God destroyed the fence between him and us, we still attempt to build fences between us and others.
- Demolishing that fence is as easy as admitting we need Him, we can't live life on our own. We will never make it if the fence doesn't come down!
- Realize that the barrier between you and Jesus has been crushed by Jesus on the cross. I call everyone today that has never surrendered your life to Jesus to do so today. Its what you have been waiting for your whole life.
- If we intend to love our church the way God wants us to, then we have to first know that Jesus crashed the fence and secondly, **allow others into your yard.**
- We come to this building and we sing together, we say good morning and talk with each other but we do it all from behind the fence.
- Jesus broke the fence down when he went to the cross, but what we do when people want in our back yard or see the real us is we begin to try to put up that old fence that was destroyed once we came to Christ. (Take broken pieces from the fence and try to mend it with duct tape.)
- Even though Jesus crashed our fence, we still want people to only see the pretty parts of our yard! So we keep building those walls.
- **If we are going too truly experience loving our church, then that means intentionally loving the church!** I don't mean loving the building or our

programs. It means loving each other. And loving each other is impossible to do from behind a fence.

- So what do we do with all of the fences that we have built? Myself included. Thank God Paul gave us the answer. He said “Do not forsake assembling together.”
- Paul is talking about an everyday Sunday. He’s talking about something bigger! He’s talking about life together and living in community together. Community means we DON’T build fences. Community means authenticity, the sharing of ourselves with others.
- (Show a picture of Wilson) The Taylors lived next to Wilson for years but never saw his face. Sometimes it’s like that for church folks. We sit in the pew with people. We go to small group with them but we never get to see their true self because they are hiding behind a fence.
- **“Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”**
- If we are truly going to experience not only the church but also life as God intended it, then we can’t live behind a fence. To truly love your church, you have to love someone in your church!!!! This doesn’t mean that everyone is transformed into super social extroverts. What it means is that we don’t live in isolation or struggle alone, hurt alone or deal with sin alone!!
- Lastly if we are going to love the church the way God wants us to then we need to: **Enjoy the company. Hebrews says “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”**
- Community is finding ways to encourage one another to love, and good deeds beyond church programming and sermons. It’s seeing beyond the walls that we have built and offering to help paint the shed or pull the

weeds or babysit the kids. It's bringing a meal in times of sickness. It's enjoying one another and helping each other to enjoy serving Jesus in the time we have.

- These things don't happen automatically. They happen when we consider how to make them happen. Let me suggest some points of strategy for all of us as a church family:

1. Have healthy expectations. An unhealthy expectation is that we'll all know everyone, that every single person will be best friends with everyone in here. That's not realistic. The reality is, we can have great friendships with some, deep relationships with a few.

2. Realize baby steps are ok. You won't let everyone in but you need to work on letting someone in at some point.

3. Take some ownership. Realize this is everyone's job, not everyone else's. We all need to work at it. On a scale of 1 and 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how much effort are you putting into connecting with other? What would you need to do to raise that number by 1 or 2 points in the next few weeks? If you know the answer to those questions then you know the solution as well.