



Elder Bible Study – Leader Guide

God's People Gather emphasizes the blessings of being together for in-person worship. This study will remind you of some of those blessings so that you will be better able to remind your people.

Introduction

In what ways has your congregation's worship changed over the past 18 months? In what ways has it remained the same? How have those things (both things that have changed and things that have remained the same) affected your congregation positively and/or negatively?

List at least three blessings of worshiping in person.

You likely listed many blessings. But, for the sake of our study, let's focus on four.

Blessing #1 – The In-Person Worship Experience

Read Psalm 27:4-6

1. What did King David say he sought more than anything?

To dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of his life

2. In verses 5-6 he explains why. Summarize his explanation in your own words.

The LORD was the one who would protect and provide for him. Being in the LORD's house would both allow him to offer praise and thanks as well as remind him of God's promises.

3. Describe what is different (better) about worshiping in God's house from worshiping virtually from home.

*The emotional impact of the architecture
The encouragement of being in the presence of God's people
The joy of joining in prayer, praise, and song with others
Joining in confession and hearing absolution together, etc.*

Note: The leader may wish to have the four God's People Gather videos queued and play the appropriate video after each blessing is discussed. This will connect the video with the Scripture participants have just finished discussing.

Blessing #2 – Experiencing Christian Community

Read Hebrews 10:23-25

1. What does the writer to the Hebrews encourage Christians to continue to do?

Meeting together

2. What are some reasons he encourages this?

*To spur one another on toward love and good deeds
To encourage one another*

3. Share at least one specific way Christians who are gathered together encourage one another.

Seeing the smiles on each other's faces

Sharing the challenges they are facing and being reminded of God's promises

Hearing each other pray and sing

Etc.

Blessing #3 – Christian Service

Read Acts 4:32-37

1. What strikes you about this description of the early Christian church in Jerusalem?

Answers will vary but will likely include the unity of their hearts and minds, their generosity and their joy.

2. The early Christians were clearly passionate about serving one another. How do Christians serve each other *and* serve alongside each other when they gather together? List as many examples as you can.

Answers will vary

Blessing #4 – The Lord's Supper

Read Matthew 26:26-28

1. In the book of 1 Corinthians, St. Paul quoted Jesus as saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." Why do you suppose Jesus wanted his people to continue celebrating this special meal?

We receive nothing less than his very body and blood and with it the forgiveness of our sins.

2. You are visiting a member who wishes to worship virtually because it is so much more convenient. What might you say, using one or more of the blessings we have discussed?

Answers will vary

Further Discussion

1. Though we may prefer in-person worship, what are the blessings that virtual worship have allowed the membership to enjoy?

*Worshiping during lock-down
Hearing sermons from all over the world
Etc.*

2. Why must the matter of returning to in-person worship be viewed by the elders as a case-by-case issue?

Some members may be afraid for their health, others may simply find it more convenient and still others may be using the availability of virtual worship as an excuse and not be truly worshiping at all. Elders will want to spend a good deal of time listening to understand each member's mindset and situation.

3. Give examples of legalistic encouragement toward in-person worship.

Answers will vary.

4. Give examples of gospel-centered encouragement toward in-person worship.

Answers will vary.

5. Though we understand that only the Gospel provides proper motivation, in what circumstances might a message of law be called for in the matter of in-person worship?

If it becomes clear that the person is despising God's Word and/or sacrament. Or, if the person demonstrates a selfish heart that does not consider the needs of his/her fellow Christians.

6. List situations in which a member's return to in-person worship ought to be handled with compassion and patience.

Answers will vary.