

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Virtual Assembling

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Our word, “virtual” originates from the Latin, “*virtualis*” which comes from “*virtus*,” meaning power, capacity, or efficacy. It describes the power to “*produce a specific effect, even without physical form.*”

Generally speaking, “virtual” is describing something that is “*essentially the same as a physical object or reality in almost every practical way, even if it is technically not.*”

Something “virtual” can denote that which is “almost,” but not quite the reality desired. For example, a company desiring complete dominance in a market can claim a “virtual monopoly.”

In our modern times, the word is often used when “*referring to environments, objects or interactions that are generated by a computer or accessed over the internet rather than occurring in physical space.*”

Assembling together is essential for the Christian. It is one of the ways in which we “*consider one another.*” The Hebrew writer exhorts us: “*...let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the custom of some is*

but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing nigh” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Arousing spiritual zeal unto love and good works is kindled by the entire self - body, soul, and spirit - assembling with other Christians. In the first century, “virtual assembling” had not yet been invented. So, we know Christians were present bodily, with one soul, issuing spiritual exhortation through the body.

Was it fear of persecution that moved uncommitted followers of Christ to completely stop assembling with fellow Christians for worship and exhortation? We do not know why, but Christians were not considering the spiritual well-being of others by habitually being physically absent.

When “cheerful,” we can “sing praise,” even alone (James 5:13). But singing is also to be done when gathered together with others. Paul exhorts Christians in Ephesus to worship by “*speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart unto the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19). Speaking in song demands the use of the body. Speaking one to another demands each Christian engage their spirits, and send

scripturally formed words, through their vocal cords and tongue reaching the ears of other assembled participants.

Cooperate worship involves all who are participating, to do so in a proper manner (1 Corinthians 14). All things done were to be understood in order to *edify all gathered*, (1 Corinthians 14:5). Nothing was to be done to confuse, for God is a *God of peace* (1 Corinthians 14:33). All were to be done “*decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Virtual assembling upon the internet is not conducive for congregational worship in song, and can be confusing due to delays. All singers may not have the current “app,” to filter out unwanted noise. Perish the thought that an app would consider one’s voice as unwanted noise! The leader leads, but those singing online are not heard simultaneously with others.

Spreading the Gospel far and wide over the internet is a blessing for our time. Having two-way communication in teaching people miles apart is available online today. But occupying the same space at the same time with others offers consideration and spiritual blessings to others which “virtual assembling” cannot replace.