



Why can't you be a solitary Christian?

There are many possible reasons (see q1) but the reason given in our passage (v25) is to do with the times we are in. Jesus' death brings us forgiveness, but it does not make us perfect immediately. We are in the midst of that process. It will be complete one day, but for the time being, heaven has not yet come to earth - the final Day that God promises us has not yet arrived. We must use the present time to remain together in community so that each person is helped to persevere and continue in the faith until each one of us crosses that finishing line and reaches our goal, eternity with God at the end of the age. Don't give up, stay in the race, stay together as a team, focussed on your goal. The appropriate perspective is that there is not much time left. Jesus will return. We must persevere for that day when he comes to judge the earth and make all things new.

Until Jesus comes again, what is fellowship for?

Looking at v24 & 25 we see that fellowship is for spurring each other on, for encouraging each other in the faith. Jesus promises us that the Christian life will not be easy. Yet if we are walking with other Christians, it will always be better. As church members we are to help each other not to veer off the narrow path, but to stay on track with Jesus by staying on track together. Sometimes it is the good things in life that cause us to swerve off but, for the people originally reading the letter to the Hebrews, it was not good times that threatened their faith. It was bad times (see 10v32). None of us knows what the future holds, but the deeper we press into fellowship in the good times, the more rooted and established we will be when the narrow road is a very hard place to be.

Encouragement is a spiritual gift vital for building up the church to persevere. (See Acts 11 v 22-26 for example of Barnabas.) Encouragement is to strengthen the heart of someone, to comfort, to urge, to build someone up. One of the greatest encouragements is simply to be present, to not neglect meeting together, but to come regularly to Sunday worship and to homegroup to connect with each other.

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Questions for discussion:

1. What is fellowship for? How many different reasons can you come up with as a group ...
2. After the Welsh football victory, the commentator said *"All the players believed for what the manager set out for them. Every player willing to put their body on the line. There is only one word that sums up their performance - team. No individual players. Team, team, team."* Share examples of being part of a team in some area of your life. How does that compare to your experience of church?
3. How could we respond to someone who has stopped coming to church and says they are a Christian on their own?
4. Looking at the passage from Hebrews, there are 4 "have"s or "having"s and 5 "let us"s. What do we *have* as Christians? And what are we to *do*, therefore? To what extent are these individual or corporate activities?
5. Do you feel you are more likely to "veer off the narrow path" because of good things or bad? As a small group, how can you put into practice the exhortations in verses 24 and 25.
6. In some situations, a Christian could be unavoidably isolated. How can they grow? How can they be encouraged? Pray for those in such situations.
7. Pray for the gift of encouragement (Romans 12:6-8)

"Let us not give up meeting together as some are doing, but let us encourage one another..." Hebrews 10:25