

The Church Commute: Why Where You Live Matters

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A nose hopped into his car and pulled out of his driveway this last Sunday at 9 am. At the same time about 20 miles away, a mouth was talking to his family in a minivan as it got onto the highway. Approximately 13 miles away from them both, a foot pressed the brake at a stop sign. At 9:45, they all pulled in to the parking lot of a church building and for the first of two times that week, the nose, mouth, foot, and various other parts assembled themselves into a body.



We live in a commuter culture, or at least most of us do. Our houses are like islands from which we ferry back and forth to work, the gym, and school, none of which are really that close to where we live. We float down the wide canals past other well-lit settlements, and sometimes we stop for a hamburger.

This affects our culture, yes, but how does it affect the church? I wonder: are we missing something of the joy of the early church who were “breaking bread from house to house” and even “taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (Acts 2:46)? Is our body life suffering because all of its parts live so far away? Is it even realistic to expect close fellowship when it often takes a half-hour of driving each way to even see each other?

We may not be able to overcome all of the difficulties of our commuter culture, but perhaps we can accomplish a lot by simply considering more carefully where we live. When deciding where to live, most of us have a mental list of priorities. Does the house work well for our family? Do we like the area? Is there space for the kids to play? Is it safe? How far is it from work?

How far down your list is the church? I don't, of course, mean the church building, if you have one. Living close to a building will not necessarily promote body life. I mean the people. Are you close enough to them to have

real, daily-life kind of fellowship? Remember, the health of Christ's body is on the top of God's priority list.

Living close obviously does not guarantee good fellowship. If we don't make the effort, we could live next door and never see each other. But maybe we could create an atmosphere in which that effort is easier and more natural.

Finally, living nearer to each other could unite us in the common goal of reaching our communities. Maybe we would know some of the same people, frequent the same places, pray for the same neighborhoods. This, in the end, would not only strengthen our bonds of unity as we work on this common outreach project, but may even bring in new members of our body as they see our love for one another and receive the message about Christ.

When all is said and done, this decision is personal. And I mean that . . . in a way. It is personal in the sense that there are no set rules about where we ought to live. Every situation is different and the making of rules could create problems in the church. But let's be honest: this is *not* personal. It is corporate. It is about more than just ourselves and our families. It is about Christ, his church, and his kingdom.