

THE PASTORS' PEN

articles from the elders of BBC

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

These words were written during a time of great upheaval. Jewish Christians were facing increasing hostility from the surrounding culture. Further, within a couple of years, Jerusalem would become the centre of Israel’s most devastating war. If ever there was a time when people might be tempted to consider *themselves*, even to the point of *isolating* themselves, perhaps this would be it. But our writer counterintuitively admonishes them to consider *others*, and to do so *together*.

The word translated “consider” means “to observe fully,” or to “fix one’s eyes or mind upon” something. It is not an exhortation to merely give a

passing glance to one another; rather, it is a strong admonition to pay careful attention to one another, to look out for one another. It is an exhortation to take responsibility for the spiritual welfare of each other. This is clear from what follows: “*in order to stir up love and good works.*” That is, we are to so closely observe one another that we notice when love lags and good works languish. Our concern is to translate into effort to encourage one another in the love of God and to motivate them to keep on keeping on. “Provoking to perseverance” is a good way to put it. But again, this requires that we give *thought* to each other. We are to set our minds on practically caring for each other.

Therefore, consider one another before you post your selfie of you and your bestie. Just saying.

Paul had something similar in mind when he wrote to the Philippians, “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves*” (2:3). To “count” is to think of another—to think, “What is best for her?”

Great encouragement can arise from a simple message: “I just wanted you to know that you have been on my heart lately.” To be considered by another is to be encouraged that you *matter*. And that matters; it matters a lot.

Many people, many Christians included, live under the burden that, in the big scheme of things, they do not matter. Many feel that they are not important to others and that their

contributions are meaningless. Some live under the emotional tyranny of thinking that no one considers their hurts. On a less serious level, albeit an important one, many feel that they are always left out, that no one considers them



when making up their guest list. Yes, many Christians have the impression that, at the end of the day, no one *considers* them. We are commanded to correct this. We are commanded to be considerate. Consideration goes a long way towards ministering the love of Christ. Let me make some specific practical suggestions.

Social media. Let’s face it, some people are popular. Others, well, not so much. And the latter are often acutely aware. We should consider them when posting on Facebook, Instagram and whatever else is out there. So, you’ve been to a special birthday party of a fellow church member? Wonderful. That is a blessing. But understand that not everyone received an invitation.

Hospitality. As Christians, we are to open our lives and our homes, not only to those with whom we have the most in common, but to those who might be considered “strangers.” “Hospitable” in the New Testament means “a lover of strangers.” This is an expectation for every Christian (1 Peter 4:9), and a *requirement* for those serving as elders (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8). To whom do we open our homes? Only those with whom we feel the most comfortable? Yet, if we consider one another, we will not forsake assembling with a wider circle of people. To use an important word, we will be more *inclusive* with our invitations. When planning that Sunday lunch, consider those who are different demographically from you. If you are single, consider those who are married, and vice-versa. If you are black, consider the person who is not black. If you are young, consider those who are not so young. If you are boring, consider someone who is not boring!

Showers. No, not the water kind; rather, the wedding and baby kind. Life is busy. I get that. I experience that. But when the church has an opportunity to spoil a bride to be, or to share in the joy of providing for a mommy and her baby, *consider* them. Pay attention to what your attendance will mean to them. If at all possible, make the effort to support the special occasion.

Funerals. My pastor taught me that we should make every effort to participate in those things that we only have one opportunity to do so. Like a funeral. Your fellow church member will only bury his father one time. Consider this, consider your brother, and make the effort to be there—even if you do not know the church member well. In fact, *especially* if you don’t know them well.

I know that it is not possible to attend every funeral. But if it is possible, then consider what your presence will communicate to your grieving sister. I have seen, over and again, the encouragement ministered to a grieving spouse or child just by the attendance at a funeral. Consider one another.

In each of these cases, our considering one another is practically carried out by *assembling* with one another. The writer was not just concerned with the congregation gathering on Sunday. No, he was concerned that God’s beleaguered people gather *whenever* and *wherever* they could. This would include our dinner tables, our baby showers, our funerals and even our “gathering” via computers and smart phones.

Before closing, we need to observe that considering one another works both ways. That is, be sure to consider that not everyone can attend everything in which you are involved. In other words, though we should all be sensitive to one another, we must guard against being hyper-sensitive. Life is busy. It is impossible to attend every function connected with our congregation. So, let’s consider one another before we point the accusatory finger that we are not being considered! I suspect that if we do this, then we will grow in both love and in good works. Consider that.

