

If We Are the Body

I can hear the William Tell Overture as clearly as if it were yesterday. From a distance, in a cloud of dust, arrives the Lone Ranger (or, as we liked to call him, the Lone Stranger). With his trusty companion, Tonto, or maybe all by himself, he defeats the bad guys, repels imminent danger, and then rides off into the sunset while the “sweet young thing” of that particular episode sighs deeply and bats her eyelashes.

Isn't fiction wonderful? Just a flick of the remote and we can immerse ourselves in a fantasy world that we can tailor just to our liking.

Like “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”, we can be heroic and daring and solve all the world's problems, all by ourselves.

Only the real world isn't like that. The real world isn't changed by superheroes or masked men on horseback. The real world is changed by regular people, working together to accomplish decidedly unregular things.

How many times have you heard a professing Christian say, “Well, I don't go to church—I just worship God by myself my own way.”

Sounds good. No hassles with hypocrites, no hurt feelings from pastors or committees, no pressure to pray or pay or even show up from day to day.

But there are some problems with “Lone Stranger” Christians.

For one, their effectiveness to impact society is greatly diminished. It's pretty hard for one little ripple to change the shoreline, but take a strong flood tide and maps are rewritten.

For another, their relationship with God can be stunted. Solitude is an incredibly effective insulation from the kind of polishing each of us needs. Proverbs 27:17 says “Just as iron sharpens iron, a person sharpens the character of his friend.” (*The Complete Jewish Bible* translation)

People who choose to remain isolated from the rest of the body may believe their faith is more authentic alone. To the first century Christians that thought would have been totally foreign. The synagogue, or house of worship, was an integral part of their lives.

Worshiping in the synagogue was by definition corporate worship. Even today, a *minyan*, or 10-man quorum is required for the prayer service.

The writer of Hebrews cautioned the early believers to not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together”. (Heb. 10:25) The word used was *episunagogen*. Literally, don't forsake “synagoguing” together.

There is a reason that the church is called “The Body”. We were never meant to be unicellular entities without impact on the world around us. Each of us has a place in a congregation, as members together of the body of Messiah.