



A Spiritual Encouragement Message May 19, 2020

"Our New Normal"

Due to the current pandemic, the whole world is facing a new normal way of life almost for everything we do. Every nation, every state, every county, and every city are implementing plans and enforcing phases to reopen business, schools, and so on, to start a new normal. As Christians we also need to adapt to our new normal form of worship that will be acceptable glory to our God and Father.

The New Testament offered a new normal way of worship and living to the house of Israel (Acts 2:36-47), those first 3000 believers and so on, had to start all over again, putting aside so many ancient practices, rituals, customs, traditions, and prejudice. The gentile believers as well, had to adapt to the new normal, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds"(Ephesians 4:17). They all had to become transformed new creatures. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Today our new normal worship for Sunday mornings will be one where God's people show up early to serve Him and to praise Him, where if one is late it's an isolated occasion and not a bad habit.

Our new normal worship will be one where all the body, every able member of the family will be showing thankfulness and reverence with their presence, "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 10:25). Where no one makes vain, unacceptable excuses related to possessions, work, or family (Luke 14:15-27).

Our new normal worship acceptable to God will be one where each one of us really prepares by faith our own part in the service, making a true effort to offer our best possible service to God and His people every single time. "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks (Hebrews 11:4). As living sacrifices, we need to come out of our comfort zone and think on the rest of our family in the faith, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). We have members driving from as far as Imperial Beach, San Ysidro, Chula Vista, Bonita, Point Loma, Poway, San Marcos, Rancho Bernardo, Jamul, Julian, Alpine, Ramona, plus other far

away distances, and we all come bringing our loved ones expecting to be mutually edified in love. "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4). If I am trusted with an honor to serve in any small or big way, I should not just expect all others to constantly tolerate mediocrity from me being irresponsible, unconsidered and unprepared. Our new normal will be one where every saint having the privilege to participate in service, will focus on worshiping God and edifying the church. Whether it is praying, singing, reading, preaching, or especially if serving the Lord's supper, we need to keep our focus. To get up and share our day, or favorite team, it's totally irrelevant, and unacceptable, besides it is unfair to our sisters who would love to have that opportunity, "But all things should be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Our new normal should be one where we thoughtfully prepare our prayers to connect our brethren with our Father and Creator, and not just repeat typical religious trampled wording to fill up some time. Where we sing and not add an extra talk or "reinforcement" to the sermon. Our new normal acceptable to God should be one where the Lord's supper is a time of reverence, honor and respect and not restroom time, whispering time, nor counting money for the collection time as an irreverent person.

Our new normal should be one where we prepare our sermons as our Father provides our fresh daily bread, as a mother prepares her meals to nurture her children, where we don't have to last minute desperately repeat how much we love every other verse we read, or pretend to teach by filling up time saying empty expressions of how amazing and awesome is every verse we quote. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time?" (Matthew 24:45).

Our new normal should be one where we all get involved in making God's visitors feel welcome every time, after all they visit Him not simply just us. "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you" (1 Corinthians 14:24-25).

Our new normal should be one where our youth sit together with our widows providing a quality warm loving time to them and not just sitting with their peers missing out on a huge opportunity to serve. "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world" (James 1:27).

Our new normal should be one where we all get out of our way going the extra mile to show love to each other and not just forming selfish comfortable groups. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another" (John 13:34).

Our new normal should be one where we each invite and teach our own friends and family, at least as

much as we each know, in a mutual effort to bring growth to God's kingdom on earth.

Our new normal acceptable to God is one where each one of us don't just go back to the formal normal, but we will each do our best efforts to offer our best possible worship to our Father.

Our new normal should be according to the New Testament. God expects a new normal where serving Him and His kingdom is our plan and priority. Our shepherds will provide new instructions in due time.

In Christ,

Oscar Velazquez