

DAY 31 WEDNESDAY

HEBREWS 10:24-25 THE COMMUNITY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

²⁴ *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.* ²⁵ *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

St. John of the Cross uses the analogy of a coal in a fire to illustrate the essential nature of community for the Christian life. He describes a blazing fire, probably the one that was warming the room in which he was writing. There are many coals on the fire, all of which are burning. However, if you were to remove one of the coals from the others and place it to the side by itself, although it would continue to glow briefly, the coal would smolder and go out in short order.

In a world of gas logs, high efficiency furnaces and the mandate to limit our carbon footprint, this analogy may be as remote as our experience of true community. There is a nostalgia for community that lurks within us and breaks the surface in artificial forms like “towne center” shopping malls and on line “communities.” The truth is that God designed us to be in community, with Him and each other. Our individualism has isolated us and rendered us vulnerable to every kind of temptation.

Like the isolated coal from the fire, we need to be returned to the company of the other believers in order to fulfill our function. We need to be a part of a loving community centered on God that encourages us and prods us to live in obedience to God. Our church needs to be more than a one-hour-per-week outlet for worship. We need one another everyday throughout the week. If we are to be a witness to the world of the love of God, we need all the help we can get to keep that fire kindled at home, at work, at school and even where we play. Participation in small groups, Bible studies, church programs, ministry opportunities and meeting regularly with a fellow believer are all ways to live in true community and grow as Christ’s people.

Dear Lord, draw me closer to you. You have provided your community in order to provide the necessary environment for my growth. Help me to willingly participate in it that I might experience your love and be trained to share that love with others. Also give me the grace to submit as a member of the community so that I might not stray from your will. Amen.