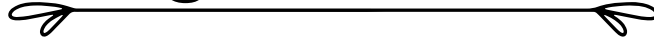


spurring one another on



The concept of paying to run is a dividing topic: like pineapple on a pizza. Or watching Singles Inferno. Some people love it and some are adamantly against it. As a deal-loving, freebie-hunting, Korean ahjumma that lives by the “why would I pay for something I could do myself” anthem, I get why people would never pay for a race they could run on their own.

The concept of going to church every Sunday is a dividing topic too. Of course, there are Christians and non-Christians but even amongst Christians there is variation, and many reasons people don’t congregate in the physical church. At the time the letter of Hebrews was written, Christians were facing persecution and hardship when they gathered. In our present time and space, persecution isn’t coming from Gentiles and stones, but it doesn’t mean we don’t face it. On a macro level, we see instances on the news, hear of it in other parts of the world, and read about it on social media platforms as Christians are slandered for having conservative beliefs in a progressive society. On a meso level, I wonder if a lot of the persecution and hardship that keeps Christians from gathering actually comes from within the four walls of the church in the form of judgement, gossip, bitterness, frustrations at how the church is run, etc. On a micro level it can be social anxiety from the dreaded “turn and say hello” time and small talk afterwards; the hectic battle of getting the kids up and ready; the demands of our jobs; the expectations of family; the preference of comfort and convenience of a live stream service; etc. We may not face Roman soldiers and crosses, but there are many struggling people who have given up on meeting together or gotten in the habit of doing so.

And so, we are called to spur one another on and encourage each other.

Whenever I see Hebrews 10:24-25, I metaphorically imagine a race day and I, the Korea ahjumma, have indeed paid to run. The day of my first race, it was miserably cold and raining for the entire 13.1 miles, but I had to be there because 1) I paid for it and 2) I was running with a friend who recently got diagnosed with cancer. What I didn’t expect or understand is the neighborhoods and streets full of people that were standing in the cold rain to give high fives to strangers, the amount of volunteers handing out snacks and water, the one random dude that was passing out cold beers (which I took), and how much it actually helped to run alongside all the other miserable looking people until we got to joyfully celebrate at the end.

Going to church isn’t always a “sunny day”—sometimes it feels like trudging along with other “miserable people” who learned to put on a smile to mask the struggles and sins. But sometimes, someone’s welcoming hello is the high five you need to keep going. Sometimes the message feels like water (or ice-cold beer) to the dry soul. On Sunday mornings, we are individuals drawn together by a larger purpose and the Christian race binds us in unity. Being with others who also place their hope in God’s character, plan, and power reinforces in our hearts that we are neither alone nor insane in our faith. So don’t give up. Find ways to encourage each other. Maybe check on a friend or member you haven’t seen in a while. “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds...all the more as you see the Day approaching.”