

What Church Leaders Desperately Need Before Welcoming Back Their Flocks

Following nearly three months away from their sanctuaries due to COVID-19, church leaders are slowly beginning, as the law permits, to allow their congregations to come back to their respective worship centers. But at this point, is it the right thing to do?

The Hon. Sam Rohrer, president of the American Pastors Network, says church leaders must answer that question with “real discernment,” discernment that comes through prayer and communion with God the Father.

“God says in his Word, in James, ‘if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.’ And I think these are times we must ask for wisdom. There are churches that I can tell you about across the country that never, ever closed. They continued to meet, and they are meeting now like they have met all along, sitting in the pews and the babies in the nurseries. And they did it with the knowledge of local law enforcement.

“Pastors that I know, nobody got sick in their churches. They said, ‘This is an essential thing, and we’re going to trust God.’ My sense is this: One size fits all may not be the case. I can tell you that one size fits all from the standpoint of what God says. And I can tell you what the Constitution says. But when it comes to the application, it may vary from what one region of the country to another, or one level of anxiety for people in the congregation or another. Some churches I know have been meeting for six weeks. But at this point, maybe only 75% of the congregation are attending physically, and the other 25% are choosing to watch online.

“The pastor needs to know the state of his flocks. Within that

context, I think he needs to shepherd them to where they are. The rules of this game, 'the rules' meaning the facts of COVID and so forth, we all know they continue to change, and experts contradict each other all the time. You certainly are not dealing with biblical truth when you're talking about COVID-19.

"So where this is where wisdom is necessary, and it should not be viewed in a 'right or wrong' way. The pastor needs not to shepherd his flock with timidity. He needs to err on the side of truth—knowing what the Bible says and what the Constitution says—and with wise leadership, lead his people forward in a time when we very clearly as a nation are being led to think in uncertain times to be fearful. That's why this whole thing has been done: to make people fearful. That's not what God intends us to do."

For more about civil and moral law as they pertain to our churches and our society, listen to the entire podcast.