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Ephesians 3: 10 NLT.*  Have you ever felt two opposite emotions at the same time? This past Easter, over 100 people raised their hands to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. It was so exciting to hear. The next week, we baptized about 30 people! It was exciting to catch their enthusiasm. God is on the move! So I experienced the joy and excitement with our church, and more importantly, The Church. But these new converts are going to need milk and nurturing in God's ways. They need this if they are to grow up like He desires. I want them to fall in love with Jesus, but also His church.  So my question to all of us is, do you love the *church*? He does. Do you respect God's heart toward His church? Is it easy for you to criticize it? But my friends, it is easy to forget the church comprises people. Those people are you and I!  If we as "mature" believers do not model love for God's house, then how are they to learn to?  Maybe you are struggling to love your specific local church. If something has offended you, do not let it fester. Do you not see how the enemy is trying to separate you? If not physically, then emotionally? Forgive where you need to forgive. Get clarification where you need clarification. Remember, every church is made up of imperfect humans. We often expect the perfection of others and want grace and mercy for ourselves. What type of church would the church be if everyone was like you? Now we know we aren't all the same and that can create problems. But He has made us a body with separate parts and functions. So learn to be grateful for those with different gifts than you have.  Hebrews 10:24-25: *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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.*Here is another question to consider. How can you stir one another to love and good works? You can't do this if you are not with one another. Satan wants us to focus on ourselves, so we think "It won't matter if I go today". The thing he won't tell you is how God might use you that day for someone else. If we go with self-focused eyes, we will miss Him using us to help others. Even if you are shy and introverted, God can show you how to pray for someone! "Nobody talked to me" "That church is cold"....hmmm, did you talk to someone? Jesus shed His blood for everyone in your church, the same price He paid for you. It may take an effort to love them, but it may take an effort to love you too!  *For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without spot.* *Ephesians 5:25-27. NLT* I think we often forget how much God loves His church. We often forget the price He paid for her. We also forget how He is working to make her glorious. We are like spoiled and immature children. We quickly complain and criticize if we don't get our needs met through her as we think we should. It is time to grow up.  Remember what He said to Peter? *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Matthew 16: 18. ESV*. God will perfect His church. It will keep standing. My friend in India shared with me that a house church was attacked and the pastor put in jail. They are standing strong in the face of adversity and persecution. Let's not worry about minor issues. Instead, let's take the time to pray for our brothers and sisters who are being persecuted. I am so grateful we have the freedom to worship here in this country. Don't waste it. There may come a time when we can't gather. My friends in India are meeting secretly, but they are meeting. They strengthen one another by being together. Let's do the same.  *Father, help us honor and strengthen your church. Not just our local one, but the universal one. We choose to stand with those who may think differently than we do on a topic, but still name you as Lord. Forgive us for disrespecting your Bride, Teach us to love your church, as you do.  in Jesus' Name, amen.* | |