



FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

"One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." ~ Merlin Olsen

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Community

I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for companionship, three for society.
~ Henry David Thoreau, from [Walden](#), 1854

As some of you may know, for the last couple of months, I've been pursuing an [Analog Summer](#). This has resulted in some pretty dramatic changes to my lifestyle, including virtually no TV (except perhaps watching a documentary with my family once a week), little or no time spent online after 4:00 on weekdays and a drastic reduction in the amount of news I watch or read and emails I send to friends. Instead, I've been spending more time enjoying the unusually long, beautiful evenings, walking my dog (while looking for foxes and bears), being present and reading books with my family and having fun or important conversations with them. It's been a nice, much-needed change in my life.

As a result of this experiment, I've also rediscovered community by attending church (which is heavy on music and singing [many of the songs are hundreds of years old, which provides a sense of connection to others through the ages], with a sermon that inspires or challenges me), community dinners, concerts by local musicians at our community amphitheater and political discussion meetups at a local coffee shop. It's been nice to meet new people and get to know them and hear their stories.

It's a vast difference from the asynchronous, mostly anonymous online world, where you're constantly bombarded by threats (both real and imagined) and examples of random acts of violence, barbarism and evil. To be clear, the human brain has never before been exposed to such a constantly high volume of malevolence so is now perpetually in Fight or Flight mode, with disastrous consequences for our mental health, relationships and wellbeing.



For millennia, humans communicated in real time in meatspace, primarily via body language, facial gestures and tone of voice, which is why spending time being present with people feels so natural, while spending hours looking at screens tends to result in [anomie](#).

I've been reading a book about the history of my local area (learning about your ancestors or local history is another good way to spend time during an Analog Summer), and even though most of the population was somehow involved in the moonshine industry, apparently the vast majority of them also attended church (which was also known as a *meeting house*, which always lacked an HVAC system), where much of the local socializing took place.

According to the book, "Although [local] families were members of a particular church, they often visited neighboring churches....Once a year a week-long revival...was held with services each morning and evening. Many walked to both services from several miles away...[each service] might go on for two or three hours." Compare that commitment with the amount of time spent to watch one Tik Tok video.

The book continues, “The revival meeting season was one of the few times young people could openly carry on a courtship. They sat in buggies and talked or they walked to the spring together to fetch water. Bolder couples sat together in church, prompting a lot of elbow nudging and whispering by their peers.” Quite a difference from today's swipe right, hookup culture. Which way of living is more likely to stand the test of time? Which is more honorable and which is more base?

In conclusion, I've enjoyed rediscovering meatspace (which the government's COVID response tried to destroy), connecting with people in person and in real time, and sharing stories and laughter with them. It's been quite grounding and soul-filling, and it makes it easy for me to forget about all of the problems of the world, the vast majority of which I have little or no control over anyway.

Even a recluse like Thoreau had a third chair.

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