

Why Attend Church?

Introduction

“Oh, I had to work last Sunday,” he responded when asked why he didn’t attend church. Sure, he was a Christian—but he also had to work for a living. Yet skipping worship this one time soon became two Sundays missed in a row and eventually a new habit was born—the pattern of trying to go it alone in the Christian life. Going it “alone” led to loneliness, so he rarely spoke the name of Christ or even referred to himself as a Christian. A new “me and them” language developed. He was sliding down on the slippery slope.

The problem is not new. Some Jewish Christians in Israel only about 30 years after Christ also had begun to withdraw from public worship with believers. Maybe they had to work that day too. Maybe it was too inconvenient to get up early to attend services before heading off to Sunday work. Maybe they were “just too tired” to fellowship in services after work on Sunday evenings. Maybe they still did attend Jewish Sabbath services—but these were with Jews who had not trusted in Christ as Messiah. We don’t know. We just know that they had begun to withdraw from being with true believers.

A concerned Christian leader had to do something about this. He had to write them a letter. We call his letter the “Book of Hebrews.” After ten chapters of impassioned pleas he wrote:

“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

So Why Attend Church?

- A. Christ is the Better Way: Huge crowds followed Christ in his ministry, but after he made some disturbing statements “many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (John 6:66). When he asked the Twelve whether they also would leave, Peter spoke for them all:

“Lord, to whom should we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:68).

So what about *you*? Do *you* have a better way? Do you have *another* way for people to attain eternal life? If so, follow it! If not, return to Christ. In his letter, the author of Hebrews used the word “better” thirteen times to show his readers that by not attending worship anymore, they were following an inferior way—not the better way of Christ. Since he alone has eternal life, the “second best way” is eternal death!

- B. You should identify with people holding God’s values. It’s no surprise that we all become like those we hang around.

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Cor 15:33).

- C. You need exposure to God’s Word. Sure, you can study the Bible on your own. However, the sense of accountability is heightened when you study with others as the early church did:

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42).

- D. You will renew your relationship with Christ. You are not the only person who loves Christ. When you are around others who fellowship with him, you learn to deepen in that love.

- E. You show humility. Attending church is an admission that you cannot “go it alone.” Pride is the first and deadliest sin.

- F. You broaden your perspective. Believers who forsake commitment to a body of believers end up critical and negative. On the other hand, the exchange of ideas at church helps keep us sharp and fresh in our walk with Christ.
- G. You need not defend yourself any more. Once you get back into a fellowship then you won't have to make the others all hypocrites to keep you from feeling guilty.
- H. You get your eyes off yourself. The person who neglects ministry to other believers is basically self-focused. Change your perspective into one that looks out for others:

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too" (Phil 2:3-4).

- I. You obey God. Face it. You know that God tells you, "Do not forsake assembling with others" (Heb. 10:24). So stop disobeying God and start obeying him—today!

Contrasts Between Believers Attending Church and Those Who Neglect Church

Issues	Attenders	Slackers
<i>Quality</i>	Follow the better way (John 6:68)	Follow an inferior substitute
<i>Identification</i>	With people holding God's values	With people holding worldly priorities
<i>Exposure to Word</i>	Maintained	Lacking
<i>Relation to Christ</i>	Renew their first love	Forsake their first love
<i>Relation to Others</i>	Humility by needing them	Pride by "going it alone"
<i>Typical spirit</i>	Open minded to new patterns	Critical of others
<i>Defense for actions</i>	"I need to be accountable"	"People at church are hypocrites"
<i>Chances to serve</i>	"I attend to help others"	"I don't want to help other believers"
<i>Obedience</i>	Obey Hebrews 10:24-25	Disobey Hebrews 10:24-25

Do You Agree or Disagree?

To explore your own ideas on this vital subject, please mark as A, U, or D beside each statement below to show whether you Agree, are Unsure, or Disagree with the teaching.

- A. It's a sin to lose the habit of regular fellowship with other believers.
- B. If it's hard to find the right church for you, God wants you to give up.
- C. Sometimes God doesn't allow us to find fellowship because he wants us to begin a new one.
- D. It is selfish to neglect going to church.

Conclusion

It's amazing how many Christians rationalize not going to church. Don't join their critical ranks!