

# Church Attendance

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A certain congregation had dwindled in size, so much so, that when the minister said, “Dearly Beloved,” the maiden lady in the front row thought he was proposing to her!

The heart of the Psalmist was thrilled when contemplating going up to Jerusalem and entering the temple (God’s House). This was no burdensome duty or dreary routine. In going to the temple to worship he found fulfillment and gladness. There was a sense of excitement, meeting with God, and expecting to hear from God.

Why are local church ministries suffering today? Many times it’s because of a lack of zeal to attend the local church and commitment on the part of the saints. The secular things begin to crowd out the sacred things in their lives and they forget to do the first things! They prioritize their lives according to their own plans and goals instead of obeying God’s design for their personal lives and families.

Matthew 6:33

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

It would seem that pastor’s need to start blowing the whistle and challenge those believers who are failing to attend church on a regular and consistent basis. The matter of faithful church attendance in the Christian life needs to be addressed in these last days of carefree living and when there is so much to distract the believer from attending church regularly. The smaller, Bible-believing, independent churches are suffering because there are many Christians who lack dedication to the church services and they opt out, when it comes to their involvement in church life and ministry. Many times Christians are dedicated to everything else except to church! They are putting their programs, plans, and particular interests before church attendance and what God expects from their lives. They are also sending wrong messages to their children concerning the importance of church attendance. When parents are frequent church skippers, or

ecclesiastical hitchhikers, they can be sure that their children will grow up with the same habits.

Dear Christian friend let's stop living in a fool's paradise. As a Christian, God wants us to be faithful and committed to attending the local church. God expects His children to attend a Bible believing, fundamental, separated local church on a regular basis. Church attendance and commitment to a local Bible believing church is a key part of discipleship training and becoming a follower of Christ. When you frequently miss church you are not being a good disciple or follower of Christ.

Luke 6:46

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”

Let's set the record straight. A person's church attendance reveals the level of their discipleship or commitment to Jesus Christ. God expects us to attend church regularly, so we can be guided by the Word of God, and discover what it means to be a follower of the works and ways of Jesus Christ.

God's children should attend church regularly.

There are several reasons why we should attend church.

### **1. Because Christians need each other.**

Hebrews 10:24-25 says:

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Notice:

- a. The command is given

The word “forsake” means to abandon. It's when we desert God's House and stop attending and meeting with God's people corporately. Some (“as the manner of some is”) were defecting and

going back to Sabbath observance and reverting back to Judaism. The epistle of Hebrews repeatedly warns about this and the need to move on to maturity (“let us go on” - Heb. 6:1).

Donald Barnhouse said:

“The epistle of Hebrews was written to Hebrew Christians to tell them to stop being Hebrew Christians.”

Some of the Hebrew Christians were having a hard time transitioning between Judaism and Christianity and were reverting back to the old ways of Judaism by abandoning Sunday worship and returning to Sabbath observances. Some Christians were overcome with the cares of life and stopped attending church services. Other Christians do not totally stop attending Church; however, backslidden saints can quickly be overcome by the world, which results in them forsaking many of the stated gatherings of the local assembly. There is a very real danger of being overcome by worldly ambitions and goals which causes Christians to jettison the regular church meetings. Beware!

Of course, we can draw an important application from this verse for all of us today. This verse may be regarded as a general exhortation for all believers to be faithful in their church attendance. No person will end up abandoning church services if they remain faithful in their attendance. Many Christians do not regularly attend church services. In time they can become like a car that begins to sputter or misfire and then ultimately breaks down. Those Christians who repeatedly neglect God’s House (church attendance) can eventually find themselves abandoning the stated gatherings for God’s saints and breaking down on the highway of life. When you become lackadaisical in your church attendance, you begin to gather spiritual rust and dust in your Christian life.

As someone once said:

“Do not become a rusty, musty, dusty Christian.”

b. The course must be maintained

The expression “and so much the more” (Heb. 10:25) stresses the importance of faithfulness when it comes to meeting with God’s saints. We need to attend church more, not less, in light of the days in

which we are living. In these last days we need to find solace and encouragement by meeting together.

Friend, it is wrong for you to abandon the time that God has set aside for your spiritual learning and profit. What every Christian needs to do immediately, after they are saved, is develop a pattern of faithful church attendance. Here is a good habit and practice. When the doors of the church are open, you should strive to attend regularly, and not forsake God's meetinghouse. God's people must be faithful and disciplined in their church attendance. It's amazing how we can discipline our lives in so many other things, but when it comes to church attendance, we are without discipline. If some Christians would go to work, the way they attend church, they would be out of a job, and also out of money!

c. The cause is stated

There are two reasons why Christians need each other

a. For stimulation (motivation)

It is interesting to note that the emphasis in these verses is not on what a believer gets from the assembly, but rather on what he can give or contribute to the assembly. Many times Christians attend church only to receive, instead of seeking to give to others.

The word "consider" carried the ideal of thoughtful perception and serious concern. As fellow believers, we should be truly concerned about one another's spiritual health. The world does not revolve around you. Many Christians are part of a cult – the cult of "Me, Myself, and I." But the Bible says that we are to "consider one another." This means we should not live selfishly but live in such a way that we invest in the lives of others. We should be interested in the well-being of others and when we come to church we will reflect this in our fellowship and encouragement that we give to others and as we use our gifts to help others in the body of Christ as we meet together.

The word "provoke" in verse 24 means to stir someone up, arouse them, or excite them. It has the idea to stimulate people to love God

more and do more for God. When we come to church, we should arouse other Christians to serve God and be faithful to Him in every area of their lives. Our excitement, zeal, singing, worship, and love for God should rub off on others. What we say and what others see in us should stir them up to love God more, love the unsaved more, and go out and serve the Lord more (“provoke them unto love and good works”). We should remember to invest our prayers and time in the lives of others, stirring them up to do what is right in a world that is wrong. The Bible is teaching that when God’s people meet together, they should stir one another up to live for God and love Him more. Provoking people, stirring them up, and arousing them to serve the Lord and be committed to Him is what it takes to keep other Christians from the hardening and delusion that sin creates within their life (Hebrews 3:13).

b. For solace (encouragement)

In verse 25, the word “exhorting” carries the idea of encouragement and consolation through the use of instruction. We are to attend church regularly so we can help others in their Christian walk by encouraging them to remain faithful in their Christian life and walk. Again, our own zeal, commitment, and love for God can be an encouragement to the lives of other believers in the assembly. Let us never forget that we encourage others by our own presence in church as our life reveals an apparent love and commitment to God.

We should come to church in order to be a blessing to other Christians. Make me a blessing to someone today! This should be our prayer when we attend church. We should seek to stir up the saints to love God more, be committed to God more, and encourage them to keep on the firing line. God’s people need encouragement and we become a tremendous blessing to them when we encourage them to stay true, stay right, and stay committed to the things which are important and which matter.

"When a man ain't got a cent  
And is feelin' kinda blue,  
And the clouds hang low and heavy  
And won't let the sunshine through,  
It is a great thing, O my brother,

For a fella just to lay  
His hand upon your shoulder  
In a friendly sorta way."

## **2. Because Christ is coming again.**

Hebrews 10:25

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*. and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

The end of Hebrews 10:25 presents another reason why we should attend church and encourage other Christians by our presence and faithfulness to God. The text says, "and so much more, as ye see the day approaching." Paul's reference to "the day" is not referring to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Jesus foretold of the destruction of the temple (Matt. 24:1-2) but He did not tell them when it would take place. However, some writers suggest that since the hostilities which led to the Jewish-Roman War (A.D. 66–73) were now upon the readers, and since persecution was being felt by the Romans, that the writer of Hebrews is referring to the day of the Roman judgment upon Jerusalem.

The Hebrew Christians were to remain in the local church assemblies, and not abandon them, knowing the destruction that was coming to Jerusalem. This conclusion and view of this passage seems rather weak in my opinion. Believers were never told to rally around the destruction of the Jewish temple but the Rapture of the Church (Heb. 10:37). The reference to "that day" is usually used in the New Testament as a reference to "the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:6; 10; 2:16) of "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14). This is clearly referring to the Rapture of the Church and our accountability before the Lord.

Philippians 1:6

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

## 2 Timothy 4:8

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

The Rapture of God’s saints into Heaven, the Father’s House (John 14:1-2), will be the day of all days, and we are commanded to live in light of it. Why should we be in church on a regular basis encouraging other Christians? It’s because Jesus is coming again. The time when Christ is going to return is drawing near. I’d rather be in church on Sunday morning, if Jesus were to come, instead of on the golf course. I’d rather be in God’s House instead of fulfilling my own personal goals and agenda in life.

Have you heard about the golfer named Jones who was twenty minutes late at the first tee on Sunday morning? The other three members of the regular four-some were almost ready to drive off without him. "I agreed with my wife," explained Jones, "that this Sunday I'd toss a coin to see whether I played golf or went to church. Heads, I played golf. Tails, I went to church. And you know fellows; I had to toss that coin forty-three times before it came up heads."

I know this is a rather comical illustration, but it helps us to realize why so many people are missing church today, and where their priorities are really at within their own personal lives. When Paul spoke about seeing the day approaching, he had in mind the teaching regarding the imminent return of Christ in the Rapture.

How can one see the day of Christ’s return approaching? In one sense, we can visibly see and know Christ’s coming is drawing near as we view the moral darkness taking place in the world during the last days (2 Tim. 3:1-13). Paul gave the general trends of this age, as it winds down, and what conditions will be like in this world before Jesus returns. This alone should lead us to believe that Christ’s coming can’t be far away.

The “seeing” (Heb. 10:25) may also have to do with possessing a spiritual vision and expectancy in our hearts regarding Christ’s imminent return. If we can see the day approaching (impending) we are looking for Christ to return at any moment (“we look for the

Saviour” - Phil. 3:20). Thayer, a noted Greek scholar, states that the metaphorical meaning of “see” can mean “to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing, to consider, to contemplate, to look at, to weigh carefully, to examine.” In other words, when we can “see” something approaching we are contemplating and longing for the event to take place. This should be our attitude toward the Rapture. It’s an attitude of expectancy and zeal that revolves around the teaching of Christ’s return.

Titus 2:13

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The reference to seeing Christ’s coming may speak of an earnest desire to see or witness Christ return at any moment so we can be delivered from our earthly trials and tribulations. The point seems to be this. Christians should remain faithful to the stated gatherings of assembly life, when they realize that Christ could return at any moment. First, we can use the promise of Christ’s return as a way to motivate ourselves to keep attending church faithfully, so we can be involved in church life and ministry during these last days.

Knowing Christ could return at any moment, should keep us on our spiritual tiptoes, attending church regularly, staying involved in church life, and growing in our Christian lives. Second, while attending church, we can use the promise of Christ’s return to stimulate others to serve the Lord and remain faithful to Him in the midst of difficult and hard times. Since Christ’s coming is imminent, we can use the blessed hope of His return as a way to encourage others while attending church.

John Philips, the Plymouth Brethren, aptly remarked:

“As the darkness deepens all around – and what abundance evidences there are everywhere today that the Lord’s coming is near-believers especially need each other’s fellowship. We are to cling together and resist every pressure that would draw us away from the assembly of God’s people. Business pressures, family pressures, social pressures, economic pressures, entertainment pressures, and physical pressures all militate against our being present at the gatherings of God’s people. Let us face our great responsibility.



Having been invited to come into God's immediate presence, we must resist anything that would draw us away."

Jesus is coming again! Does that mean anything to you today? Does that strike a chord in your heart? Are you actually expecting Christ to return at any moment, even on Sunday! Let's take our church attendance and Christ's imminent return to another level. As a Christian, do you want to be found sitting at home on Sunday morning watching "Bugs Bunny" when Jesus returns? Do you want to be found watching the Super Bowl Sunday evening when Jesus comes? Let's set our priorities and become more committed to the Lord's House.

1 John 2:28

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

If we do not arouse each other to be faithful to the Lord, then we are going to be ashamed before Jesus when He returns. Generally speaking, a proper outlook and uplook in life regarding Christ's return will motivate us to attend church more faithfully. It will spur us on to greater faithfulness in our church attendance. It will motivate us to be doing what is right when Jesus returns. You can write out a list of excuses a mile long and con yourself into thinking that you are exempt from regular church attendance; however, what excuse will really matter, when Jesus returns and you are found to be unfaithful?

None of us will be able to wiggle out of our unfaithfulness when Jesus returns (2 Cor. 5:10). We will have to face the shame of not being committed to Christ when He returns. What is Christ going to think of your overall track record of church attendance? What kind of reward can you possibly receive with all of your lack of devotion, discipline and dedication? Jesus is coming again and He will reward us for our faithfulness and dedication to His cause.

Revelation 22:12

"And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

One of the strongest motives for faithfulness is the imminent coming of Jesus Christ (“as you see the day approaching”). Jesus is coming again. Do we really believe this truth? Are we expecting Him to return? Did we wake today and say, “Perhaps today!” We should recognize that Christ could return at any time and attend church faithfully in light of this, so He would be pleased with our level of commitment to Him, when He returns.

A little old man was seen every Sunday morning walking to church. He was deaf, so he could not hear a word of the sermon or the music of the choir, or the hymns sung by the congregation. A scoffer asked, "Why do you spend your Sundays in that church when you can't hear a word?" He replied, "I want my neighbors to know which side I'm on!"

### **3. Because we are called to use our gifts.**

1 Corinthians 1:7 says:

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This verse is given in the context of the church meeting or gathering (vs. 5). God expects us to be in church using our gifts for Him, as we anticipate His Son’s return. What are your gifts and are you using them in the context of the local church ministry? Maybe you have put your gifts on the shelf and they are collecting cob webs. Can you imagine how a church would explode if everyone took their gifts seriously and began to use them faithfully?

1 Peter 4:10 declares:

“As every man hath received the gift (literally “a gift”), *even* so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

God has given at least one gift to you, so you can use this gift to minister to others and serve them. This is especially true in the context of the local church. When you go to church, you can use your gift to build up other believers and encourage their lives.

1 Corinthians 12:7

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

This is yet another reason why God expects you to attend church faithfully as a Christian. As Christians, we are to attend church so we can invest in the lives of other believers. We can do this by serving one another in the local assembly with the gifts of helps, mercy, ministry, encouragement, giving, and teaching (Romans 12:6-8). We are to use our gifts within the church to bring edification to other believers. Our gifts should not be kept dormant and put on a shelf. We must “stir up” the use of our gift (2 Timothy 1:6). Gifts must be used for the spiritual profit of other Christians within the setting of the local church.

1 Corinthians 14:12 says:

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.”

It is important to note that the Christians you meet in the Book of Acts were not content to meet once a week for “services as usual.” They met daily (Acts 2:46, 5:42), won souls daily (Acts 2:47), searched the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11) and increased in number daily (Acts 16:5). Their Christian faith was a day-to-day reality, not a once-a-week routine. Many Christians feel that God is pleased with them if they attend church once a week or once every two weeks, or even once a month. The reality is that God is not pleased with your life when you neglect attending church and refuse to use your spiritual gifts for the Lord. There should be weekly commitment to God’s House.

Here is a good rule of thumb. We should learn to be in God’s house when the doors are open, so we can be actively involved in the local church ministry and life, through the use of our spiritual gifts. To neglect the use of your gift or gifts is a sign of disobedience and demonstrates that you have an uncaring attitude toward the saints. We must serve God and one another one another with the gifts that He has given to us.

1 Corinthians 3:9 says:

“For we are labourers together with God...”

R.T. Moore gave the following parable that illustrates this truth:

A carpenter's tools were having a conference. Brother Hammer was presiding, but the others informed him that he'd have to leave because he was too noisy. "All right," he said, "I'll go, but Brother Plane must withdraw too. There's no depth to his work. It's always on the surface." Brother Plane responded, "Well, Brother Rule will also have to go. He's constantly measuring people as if he were the only one who's right." Brother Rule complained about Brother Sandpaper, saying, "He's rougher than he ought to be. He's always rubbing people the wrong way." In the midst of the discussion the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in. He went to His workbench to make a pulpit from which to preach the gospel. He used the hammer, the plane, the rule, and the sandpaper. After the pulpit was finished, Brother Rule arose and said, "I see now that all of us are laborers together with God."

#### **4. Because of our captivating love for God.**

Why do you go to church as a Christian? Is it because some preacher tells you to be in church or else? Maybe the thought of facing the wrath of some preacher frightens you half to death; therefore you attend church out of fear. I have personally met Christians who told me they attended church out of a state of constant fear and rejection by the preacher. Certain preachers try to run the lives of people and create fear and bondage in their lives (1 Pet. 5:3). Some Christians go to church out of fear. Others go to church to find entertainment and girlfriends and boyfriends. If you attend church for any other reason than you love for God, then sooner or later, you will become delinquent in your church attendance and abandon ship, fall overboard and drown in the sea of worldly living and dissatisfaction.

What is the underlying reason why we should attend church on a regular and consistent basis? It's because of our love for God!

Mark 12:30 says: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.”

If we remember the first commandment, then we will find it easy to follow the commandment, which declares we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Matt Costella wrote:

“Christians are often putting family time and family activities before the things of the Lord – things such as church attendance or Bible study. Yes, Satan can use the family, as important as it is, to keep the saint from faithfully following the Savior. We must be careful not to fall prey to family idolatry. Rather, we must love God above all else.”

Psalm 84:10

“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

David loved God with all his heart and found great delight in attending God’s House to express His love and appreciation to God (the courts of the temple in that day). “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.” This is just another way of saying that there is no comparison to spending time in God’s House. One day in God’s House is better than a thousand days outside of God’s House. David continues to reveal his love for God’s House by concluding that it’s better to “be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” In other words, even a menial task to perform in God’s house is far greater than to live a life of wickedness which dishonors God.

Yes, even a doorkeeper (guard) becomes a great blessing, when you can do this task in God’s House. My friend, when we serve the Lord together in God’s House, no task is too small. They are all important and we can enjoy serving each other and express our God toward when meeting together.

Jesus said in John 14:15:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

A Christian should be willing to obey Christ in every area of his life. The only question that needs to be asked today is this: “How much do

you love God?” You will have a hard time convincing Christians that you love God when you are unfaithful in your church attendance. Certainly you will not fool God by your lack of devotion to church and commitment to Him! Our faithful church attendance becomes the thermometer that measures the temperature of our love for God.

Someone once said:

“Don’t throw God the bone of your love without the meat of your obedience.”

## **5. Because of our communion with God.**

Worship or communion with God is another reason why we attend church. Love and worship are tied together. They should never be separated. Love for God will always produce worship toward God. When we deeply love God with all of our heart, then we will want to come to church and worship Him with all of our heart. There is a reason why we call it the “worship service.”

Psalm 5:7 says:

“But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.”

The real fear that we are to have when we come into the church service is a reverential fear of worship and awe toward God because of who He is and what He has done in our life. We must remember that our church attendance as a believer always reveals the level of our love, worship, devotion and commitment to Christ.

Psalm 27:4-6

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.”

David desired to meet with God in His House. What is the one thing you want to do throughout the week? Is attending God's House the number one thing that you want to do during the week? How excited are you to come to church? Is your heart thrilled and ready to receive from God on Sunday? David looked forward to meeting with God. Friend, when we come to church, we should come knowing that we are going to meet with God! If we would remember this, it would make a huge difference in our church attendance. Of course, we can commune with God or worship Him anywhere (Ps. 4:4). However, when we attend church and are ready to give our hearts in worship to the Lord, the entire experience becomes a great blessing to our lives.

In the Lord's House we discover His beauty ("behold the beauty of the Lord"), listen to His voice ("enquire in his temple"), find a hiding and protective place in Him ("hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock"), and experience great joy while communing with Him ("therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord"). Peter said there is "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8). In short, we find everything that we need from God and we enjoy His presence, while attending church. By the way, this is a real church service! When we attend church and find a shelter from God and enjoy God's presence, then we are really having church!

William Temple wrote:  
"To worship is:  
To quicken the conscience by  
the holiness of God.  
To feed the mind with the  
truth of God.  
To purge the imagination with  
the beauty of God.  
To open the heart to  
the love of God.  
To devote the will to the  
Purpose of God."

## **6. Because of the consistent testimony of the early church.**

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The Bible gives this clear testimony of the early church: “they continued stedfastly.” This speaks of continuing commitment to church attendance in order to hear God’s Word preached and to fellowship together as God’s saints.

There are four reasons to remain consistent in your church attendance.

a. Bible teaching

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The apostle’s doctrine or teaching refers to the explanation of Scripture as it was presented by the apostles. God’s people would meet together to hear the Bible taught by the early apostles, who were establishing the church. Their teaching was the groundwork for the local church and the establishing of God’s Word among the lives of the people (Ephesians 2:20). Later, elders would present apostolic doctrine as it was written down and recorded in the Bible. It was necessary for the people to remain faithful to the stated gatherings for their own spiritual growth and edification. Paul expected the people to be regular in their church attendance. This is why he told Timothy to preach the Word to the people as they came to hear the truth.

2 Timothy 4:2 says:

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Timothy was instructed to preach the eternal and unchanging truth of the Bible to the people who attended the meetings. Through the preaching of the Word of God Christians could be fed, challenged, and encouraged. They were to come to church and be corrected and convicted for their error and sin (“reprove”). They were to attend church and be warned about their wayward lifestyle and lax living (“rebuke”). At the same time, they were to be encouraged through the



clear presentation of the truth, especially if they were experiencing trials in life and were living a dedicated life to the Lord (“exhort”). The Bible comforts the wounded and wounds the comfortable! When you become lazy in your church attendance, your spiritual life will eventually show it. You must remember that the devil wants you to skip church and deceive you into thinking that you are justified in doing so.

Someone wrote:

“Church members are like automobiles -- they start missing before they quit.”

Christians need the weekly challenge and teaching of the Word of God to reshape and redirect their lives. They also need the grounding in the Scripture to teach them discernment on how to live among the world.

Hebrews 5:13-14 says:

“For every one that useth milk *is* unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

You need to develop within your Christian life what the Bible calls “discernment.” Lack of discernment in your life will get you into trouble and will cause you to do many things, and be involved in many practices, which are wrong and questionable. You can learn discernment as you attend a separated Bible believing church regularly and listen to the Word of God being taught. When you are faithful in your church attendance, you can begin to develop new understanding about truth and exercise or train your mind to “discern” (judge) what is right and wrong, or what is “good and evil.”

When you attend a good Bible teaching church, you can simply learn more of the Word of God and develop into a discerning Christian. You can systematically follow through a study on a certain Bible book, which the pastor is preaching through, and gain new and fresh knowledge about the books of the Bible. Systematic church attendance enhances the systematic learning of the Bible and

develops veteran believers who are skilled in the Word and which possess discernment.

b. Blessed fellowship

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

An important part of going to church is to be able to fellowship in the presence of other believers. You can’t go to church while watching a church service on Television. This is because you can’t have fellowship with a TV set! Do not use TV and religious reruns of church services as a scapegoat for your own personal church attendance. As you come together into one meeting place, we can find strength and comfort from other Christians. You can share the things of Christ with one another. This is something you cannot do with the lost people in the everyday arena of life. Dear friend, we need each other! Never forget this. The bond between believers is to be stronger than any bonds that you have with the unsaved world of mankind. We are to meet together to fellowship with those of like-precious faith and those who are like-minded. There is sweet fellowship that can be experienced because we are unified in the truth and also wonderful fellowship to enjoy when worshipping together as God’s people.

“Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love!  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.”

c. Breaking bread

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Acts 2:46

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.”

A key part of the fellowship that Christians share when they come together is the breaking of bread (1 Corinthians 10:16). Many Christians fail to realize this. When you are absent from church and miss the observance of the Lord's Table or Lord's Supper, you show your ingratitude to Christ and what He has done for you. It's really a sign of respect and gratitude to the Lord, when you faithfully attend the assembly and receive the Lord's Table. Jesus instructed his disciples to faithfully follow the observance of the Lord's Table.

1 Corinthians 11:24-26 says:

“And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

Christ expects that a disciple should attend church and fellowship with other believers while remembering His death (“this do ye”). Together we are to fellowship around the memory of the Lord's death until He returns for His children. When Jesus tells you to do something, and you don't do it, then you are really being disobedient, and are not willing to follow the Lord, as a true disciple should.

What does Jesus think when you fail to express gratitude and thankfulness to Him by making yourself absent from the very memorial service which He has designed for Christians to attend? Christians are expected to be faithful to the lasting memorial, which was designed to remember Christ's suffering and death on their behalf. Jesus has feelings! Jesus has a heart. It must break His heart when you are negligent and possess a carefree attitude toward church attendance and the memorial which He has given for His death on our behalf. As a disciple of the Lord, Jesus requires you to be faithful in your church attendance, so you can remember His loving and gracious sacrifice on your behalf.

#### d. Beneficial prayer

Another key part of our fellowship is praying together. The early church knew the importance of prayer and practiced praying together.

Although we pray in every service, which is important, one of our services is centered on prayer and when we attend the prayer meeting, we find the great blessing of praying together. The local prayer meeting has fallen on hard times! People have become too busy to pray. But prayer is vital to the advancement of church ministry and life. Furthermore, prayer unites us together in a close bond and keeps us praying for God's blessing and victory over Satan's tricks and traps. Jesus taught us to "Watch and pray" (Mark 14:38). Prayer is an important part and integral part of meeting together. Prayer is the backbone of any church ministry. The people of God are required to meet together in order to pray and further the work of the Lord. There is no other hope but prayer!

C. H. Spurgeon was showing some visitors over the Tabernacle (London). After taking them to the main part of the building, he said, "Come, and I'll show you the heating apparatus." Imagine their surprise, when he took them to a room where four hundred were gathered in a prayer meeting. The church with warmth of spirit must have the warmth-producing prayer meeting.

It is a sad but true reality that the prayer meeting of the local church is becoming extinct. Many Christians do not understand the vital ministry that prayer has on a church ministry. God's people are to meet together in order to pray together corporately ("with one accord") and touch the heart of God. The early Christians were prayer warriors. They knew that prayer made a difference. The church prayer meeting should not be an option for you that you abandon at will. You should be faithful in your attendance to the prayer meeting and learn to never relax your dedication and devotion to this vital ministry within the church. The early Jewish believers, in their transition from Judaism to New Testament Christianity, were busy in their prayer life. They had a set time for their time of prayer, and it was actually a daily matter to them. This was their sweet hour of prayer!

Acts 3:1

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*."

“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,  
That calls me from a world of care  
And bids me at my Father’s throne  
Make all my wants and wishes known.  
In seasons of distress and grief  
My soul has often found relief  
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare  
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 demonstrates the prayer principle:

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

Blessing and growth come only as we take part in the corporate ministry of prayer. The early church came together for prayer. You are to attend church regularly in order to be corporately involved in the ongoing ministry of prayer. You should commit yourself to the prayer ministry within the local church. If you are a young Christian, other believers will teach you how to pray and encourage your heart in the ongoing ministry of prayer. We must stop talking about prayer and start praying. We must come to church with an open heart and readiness to pray.

Leonard Ravenhill often said:

“No man is greater than his prayer life.”

As goes the prayer – so goes the church! Churches need to be prayer-conditioned before they are air-conditioned. Likewise, no pastor can go any further or any faster than the prayers of God’s people will take him. Lastly, when all you have left is prayer, you will find that it’s all you ever had or need!

Here is the point. A key part of the fellowship that we share as we come together with other Christians is the breaking of bread and the time of prayer.

Acts 2:42

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Here is an important truth to consider. The Greek text in Acts 2:43 really does not include the second word “and” which may actually indicate that the last two activities are pointing to what true fellowship really is within the context of the local assembly. The Lord’s Table and prayer are important times of fellowship that you bypass when you are absent from church. When you make yourself absent from these times of fellowship, you are not following God’s will and way for your life. You are missing out on what true fellowship is all about.

I have noticed over the years that those people within the church who want to start what they call “new fellowship techniques” and the people who are always crying or pushing for more fellowship are normally the people who are not faithful in their church attendance! In reality, we gather together for fellowship around the Word, prayer, and the Lord’s Table, so we can remain bonded together as an assembly of believers. We have forgotten that our study in the Word of God, prayer time, and remembrance of the Lord’s Table is a unified time of fellowship that we are to practice regularly. This is the true fellowship that takes place within the local church. Everything else is a secondary fellowship.

## **7. Because we should take care of God’s work.**

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

God expects the Christian to sacrificially give to the local church ministry. Christian giving is the way we take care of God’s House, or support His work, and continue to function as a church assembly. Here we see the command for the Christian to “lay aside” a monetary gift that they intend to give to the work of the Lord. The believer should learn to sacrifice a generous portion of his income to the work of God every week.

In a world of economic crises and a carefree attitude of many saints, God has still given us the mandate to give to His cause. Giving should be a weekly commitment for every Christian. They should follow this New Testament guideline established for giving. Here is some wisdom for the younger generation. The earlier you learn to give within your Christian life, the more God will bless you for your obedience.

The Christian must understand that he should also attend church in order to share his wealth which God has blessed him with (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). Christians should meet together in order to give together and see the work of God continue to function and move forward. Believers need to surrender their pocketbook or wallet to the Lord.

Remember:

"You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving."

2 Corinthians 9:7 says:

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

"A pig was lamenting his lack of popularity. He complained to the cow that people were always talking about her gentleness and her kind eyes, while his name was used as an insult. He admitted that cows give milk and cream, but he maintained that pigs give more. 'Why, we give bacon and ham and bristles, and people even pickle our feet,' he grumbled. 'I don't see why you cows are so highly esteemed.' The cow thought awhile and then said gently, 'Maybe it's because we cows are giving while we're living.'"

Dedication to the ministry of giving will reap God's blessing upon your present and future life (Galatians 6:7). God's laws are worth following for they will reap an abundant harvest.

## **8. Because of the course of our children's lives.**

Let's not forget the children! As parents, we must remember that we should be faithful in our church attendance, so we can get our own children involved and dedicated in the service of the local church

ministry. God expects us to be an example to them of faithfulness and He wants us to dedicate them to God's House and ministry at an early age.

1 Samuel 1:11 gives the example of Hannah:

"And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

1 Samuel 1:28

"Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there."

Hannah wanted to dedicate her son Samuel to the work and service of the Lord within the temple setting, which was God's place of worship during the Old Testament. In a similar way, this should be our desire today as parents. We should want to see our children involved in the service and work of the Lord through the ministry of the local church, which is God's place of worship for today. This should be our highest goal and ambition in life for our children. We should desire to see our children thriving in the local church setting and ministry.

My son used to wear a hat that said, "Just Like Daddy." Whether we realize or not, our children will usually develop similar habits that we have developed. They will follow in the same paths that we have gone. Will your children be dedicated to a good church ministry five, ten or fifteen years from now? Their dedication largely will often depend on the level of your church dedication today. What our children see is primarily what they become. Parents, what are your children seeing when it comes to your own church attendance? Your children are watching you. They are getting all the messages, which you are sending their way. Your lack of commitment will rub off on them. On the other hand, your dedication to God's house will impact their lives forever!

I might add something else about our children at this point. Wanting our children to succeed in other areas of life and becoming involved



with other commitments, such as sports, boy scouts, and school activities, which take the place of the child's commitment and service to the local church ministry, becomes a wrong priority for parents. It also develops wrong priorities for the lives of our children. Why must God and His House always take the back seat? Is should be first in our lives and families. Dad, attending a good church on a regular basis is the most important choice you could make for your family and children.

Near a church in Kansas, there can be seen in a cement sidewalk the prints of two baby feet, with the toes pointing toward the Church. It was said that 20 years ago, when the sidewalk was being laid, a mother secured permission to stand her baby boy on the wet cement. The tracks are seen today plainly. The Mother said she wanted her little boy to get a right start in life.

Do you as a parent want your children to be dedicated to God's house? If so, you will have to set the example, make the priorities, and stick with them. There can be no question about where the family should be on the Lord's Day. There can be no question about what should come first! It must be the house of God!

I know that at this point many Christians will say, "But I have an excused absence." I have often wondered if God gives out excused absences. Now there is another hot potato that I must briefly touch upon. Many like to always take family days on the Lord's Day. I agree; we should take a family day on the Lord's Day and come to church together as a family! Dear friends, do not make excuses for neglecting church. Let's not sanctify our disobedience! Stop making excuses to neglect regular church attendance.

Luke 14:18-20 says:

"And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."

The old quartet song goes like this:

In summertime it is too hot, in winter it's too cold;  
In spring and fall when the weather's nice  
There's some place else to go --  
Either to the mountains or to the beach, or visit some old friend;  
Or stay at home and hope that some of the relatives will drop in.  
A headache every Sunday morn, and a backache Sunday night;  
But by the time on Monday you're feeling quite all right.  
But maybe some of the children had a cold --  
Pneumonia, you suppose --  
So all the family had to stay at home --  
And blow the poor child's nose!  
Excuses, excuses; you'll hear them every day  
The devil will supply you, if from Church you'll stay away.  
When people come to know the Lord, the devil always loses,  
And so to keep them from the Church he offers them EXCUSES!!!

Throughout the years, excuses have been the focal point for a lack of church attendance. Most pastors could write a book on the different excuses that people make for not coming to church. Beware of excuses like the Sunday sick syndrome! "Morbus Sabbaticus," better known as "Sunday sickness," is a disease peculiar to some church members. The symptoms vary, but these are generally observed:

- ✓ It never lasts more than twenty-four hours.
- ✓ It never interferes with the appetite.
- ✓ It never affects the eyes.
- ✓ The Sunday newspapers can be read with no pain.
- ✓ Television seems to help the eyes.
- ✓ No physician is ever called.
- ✓ After a few attacks, it may become chronic and even terminal.

No symptoms are usually felt on Saturday. The patient sleeps well and wakes feeling well. He eats a hearty Sunday Breakfast, and then the attack comes until services are over for the morning. The patient feels better and eats a solid dinner. After dinner, he takes a nap, and then watches one or two pro-football games on TV. He may take a walk before supper and stop and chat with neighbors. If there are

church services scheduled for Sunday evening, he will have another short attack. Invariably, he wakes up Monday morning and rushes off to work feeling refreshed. The symptoms may not recur until the following Sunday unless another service is scheduled at the church during the week.

## **9. Because of our commitment to the Lord's Day.**

Revelation 1:10

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet."

Sunday is not the Sabbath but it is the Lord's Day! It's not your own day to do as you please. Therefore, we should not desire to run off and skip church and neglect what God has told us to do. It is not your own greedy day; it is actually the Lord's Day, as the Bible declares. If you want to golf, then you will have to golf in the afternoon. If you are going to take a drive, then do it in the afternoon. The Bible calls Sunday the Lord's Day. This means we should give Him his rightful time. We should be in the stated gatherings of the church. Some Christians have developed the habit to only attend church in the morning services. Every pastor has a name for these types of Christians. They are called "Morning-glories." God would also want us to be an "Evening Primrose" as well and even a Wednesday Warrior" in the ministry of prayer.

Although the time schedules (not day of worship) for the stated gatherings of church meetings have been regulated over the years, there is still the matter of faithfulness! The history of the church reveals that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the primary gathering for church worship and activity. This day of worship began in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, which was the first day of the week (Acts 20:6, 1 Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10).

The Lord's Day was a special day when Christians could commemorate the resurrection of Christ and show their appreciation for what He had done for them. The early Christians were expected to be faithful in their church attendance and the same is true for Christians today.

Do not excuse yourself from church attendance on Sunday and prayer meeting. The early Christians practiced regular and faithful church attendance. A dedicated believer and disciple will follow the pattern of the early church and be faithful to God's House. They will heed God's Word, which stresses continual faithfulness to the church ministry, when the church doors are open.

When we become lackadaisical in our church attendance, we begin to miss out on a vital part of our spiritual learning and growth. Missing church is like missing a meal. When you miss a meal you can become weaker and weaker. So it is with your spiritual life. When you miss church, you miss your spiritual meal, and become in a weakened spiritual state.

Here comes the survey you have been anxiously awaiting! How often do you really attend church throughout your lifetime? How many services do you actually miss? Go ahead and do the math. It may surprise you.

- Every seventh day is a Sunday, therefore:
- Every seven years a person has lived a full year of Sundays.
- A person 21-years-old should have had a total of 3 years of Sundays for his spiritual improvement.
- A person of thirty-five should have had five years of Sunday's.
- A person of seventy should have had ten years of Sunday's.

This is great addition if the Sundays are spent in church! It's time to really stop and evaluate our dedication to church and involvement in church ministry. We should be ready to attend church and get our needed meal from God's Word. We should be excited about church life and the opportunity to go to church and learn God's eternal truth.

God says regular church attendance is absolutely necessary for your spiritual profit. When you begin to neglect God's house, then you begin to neglect your own spiritual walk as a Christian. You are instructed to go to church and discover more about the Bible as it is revealed to you by gifted teachers of the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:11-12 says:

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

When you attend church, you go to learn more of the Word of God. You go to find out details of the Bible, which other God gifted men have searched out, in order to give spiritual guidance and assistance to God’s people.

Hebrews 13:17 says:

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you.”

This verse suggests that God expects you to attend church regularly and place yourself under the leadership of a local elder, who is faithfully and uncompromisingly preaching the Word of God. Many Christians try to avoid regular church attendance, so they can avoid any kind of pastoral leadership and Biblical authority over their lives. They don’t want to place themselves under the teaching ministry of a pastor who is faithful to the Word of God. They really don’t want any authority over their lives.

Acts 2:42 makes it very clear. The early church “continued stedfastly” in all of the church-related activities of teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. This word simply means that they were devoted and constant, they persevered and did not faint in their church attendance. The same should be true for you today. Negligence is laziness and lack of perseverance. It results in an undisciplined life before the Lord. God expects you to be disciplined in your church attendance.

A heavy rain had been falling as a man drove down a lonely road. As he rounded a curve, he saw an old farmer surveying the ruins of his barn. The driver stopped his car and asked what had happened. "Roof fell in," said the farmer. "Leaked so long it finally just rotted through." "Why in the world didn't you fix it before it got that bad?" asked the stranger. "Well, sir," replied the farmer, "it just seemed I

never did get around to it. When the weather was good, there weren't no need for it, and when it rained, it was too wet to work on!"

Sadly, this is the way it is for many Christians when it comes to their church attendance. They have good intentions to dedicate themselves to church life and ministry, but like the old farmer, they never get around to fixing their roof! They never seem to discipline their lives and overcome their lack of church attendance. The result is that their personal lives can become spiritually rotten and weakened from carnality. Many times their entire life will eventually collapse and cave in!

When we neglect regular attendance to God's House we can find ourselves being filled with many worldly distractions and moving in an empty and meaningless direction in life. The discipline of faithful church attendance is a lesson that needs to be learned quickly in our Christian lives (1 Cor. 9:22-27).

Church attendance is a matter of rearranging your schedule in life. This may include your work schedule, family schedule, social schedule, and activity schedule in order to be obedient to God's schedule (Luke 9:23).

And remember this: There is always time to do God's will!

Here are some good reasons for attending church:

- God's Word commands it.
- It's the Lord's Day.
- I can hear the Word.
- I can worship God.
- I can give my money to God
- I can use my gifts.
- I can pray with God's people.
- I can partake of the Lord's Table with deep gratitude.
- I need Christian fellowship & encouragement.
- Others need my encouragement.
- I'm teaching my children commitment to God.
- I love God more than anything else.
- Jesus is coming!

There was a rather humorous letter written to a pastor to prove the actual neglect of church attendance.

Dear Pastor,

You often stress attendance at worship as being very important for a Christian, but I think a person has a right to miss now and then. I think every person ought to be excused for the following reasons and the number of times indicated:

Christmas (Sunday before or after) --1  
New Year's (Party lasted too long) --1  
Easter (Get away for the holidays) --1  
July 4 (National holiday) --1  
Labor Day (Need to get away) --1  
Memorial Day (Visit hometown) --1  
School closing (Kids need a break) --1  
School opens (One last fling) --1  
Family reunions (Mine and wife's) --2  
Sleep late (Saturday night activities) --4  
Deaths in family--4  
Anniversary (Second honeymoon) --1  
Sickness (One for each family member) --5  
Business trips (A must) --3  
Vacation (3 weeks) --3  
Bad weather (Ice, snow, rain, clouds) --6  
Ball games (My children cannot let the team down) --4  
Unexpected company (Can't walk out) --5  
Time changes (Spring ahead; fall back) --2  
Special on TV (Super Bowl, etc.) --3

Pastor, that leaves only two Sundays per year. So, you can count on us to be in church on the fourth Sunday in February and the third Sunday in August unless providentially hindered.

Sincerely,

Faithful Member