

Is church attendance really that important? Isn't what is in a person's heart more important?

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The idea that church attendance is not very important would have seemed strange to the first century Christians. From the beginning of the church, they met together to worship God. Luke described the early church in Acts 2, saying that they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. "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, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42, 46-47). Paul wrote, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:26). Obviously, they loved to and expected to come together.

Some argue, however, that just going to church does not make one a Christian, and going to church does not have that much

to do with the kind of person one really is. There is no doubt that simply going to church does not make one a Christian, and it is also true that the kind of person one really is, is very important. But these arguments are really irrelevant, because God has commanded that they who would be pleasing to Him must meet together to worship Him. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). There is a *must* about worship to Almighty God. If one does not do what God has commanded, he sins. Jesus also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Failure to worship with the church shows a lack of love for the Lord.

The Hebrew writer said, "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" (Hebrews 10:24-25). How can a Christian provoke unto love and to good works, or be provoked unto love and to good works, when forsaking the assembling of God's people?

Every member of the body is needed for the worship services. "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body For the body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). The absentee misses the opportunity to join with other Christians in singing praises to God, offering corporate prayer to God, and in giving to God as he has been prospered. He misses the opportunity to learn from and profit from exhortations from God's word. Can anyone really say that he is better off by not participating in the worship of the church? The willful absentee sins against the God of heaven, denies himself the blessings of God, and hurts the church, the bride of Christ.