

Must A Christian Attend Every Service?

Every assembly should be considered important to the Christian. Perhaps we have emphasized being in the assemblies so much that we have not come to appreciate what takes place in those assemblies (John 4:23-24; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-10)?

If we, like David in Psalm 122:1, had the attitude, "*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord,*" the discussions on assembling would probably not take place! Now I know that David is speaking of the temple and that the church building is not the "*house of God.*" I am aware of the fact that the people who assemble there are the house of God, even when not assembled (1 Timothy 3:14-15; Acts 8:1-3). Those who have been truly converted to Christ do not look for ways to justify not assembling. They are happy for the opportunities to assemble. Like the early saints, they would, if jobs and other matters did not restrict them from so doing, meet daily in the "*temple*" and from house to house enjoying the fellowship that such affords. Those who are not happy to attend every possible assembly have an attitude problem. Their problem does not spring from disobeying Hebrews 10:23-25 nearly so much as disobeying Matthew 22:37 and John 14:15, 21.

It my estimation being at every possible assembly can better be stressed when we notice the fact that we each are to be a fellow worker in the kingdom of Christ. The figures used describing the church as a body with its many members each working together are strong incentives to be there if at all possible (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-21).

Elders are not law givers or legislators. However, they have been assigned a task for which they must give an account to the Lord as to how well they have carried out said responsibilities. Also, the membership who are responsible to "*submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls*" have some responsibility to be an active part of the work that each congregation engages in (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-6). Since the local congregation is the only organization for church work, and edification is a responsibility in each local church under the oversight of her elders, can one stand innocent before Christ who flaunts this system? It therefore becomes a public sin for which the Christian may, if they do not repent, be disciplined in keeping with the will of Christ so that soul may be saved in the day of judgment. This is not because they simply missed some of the assemblies which human judgment has set in place. It is more than that, it is a problem of rebellion to Christ's system of local church responsibilities being carried

out under elders who care for each member's spiritual well being. This rebellion manifest itself usually in missing these times of worship and edification.

We also all recognize that we fellowship brethren who only attend one assembly each week. We take into account their abilities, health and age. We are not in the business of making laws regarding these matters. We must from time to time however, inspect a person's fruit and make some judgments. For example, we need to look at the one who is always too sick to attend on the Lord's day but never misses work on Monday. We should become very suspicious that this is willful absence. Another example would be one who consistently misses other appointed assemblies but is always able to make 4H competitions, football and baseball games, school board meetings, etc. We begin to suspect their faithfulness and commitment to Christ and properly admonish them to consider their lives (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).

Generally speaking, we do what we want to do badly enough. We make provisions for doing that which is of great interest to us. How is it that some never miss a service unless they are very ill, and others cannot seem to make all services consistently for even a month at a time? If one attends every scheduled service of the local church only four hours out of 168 hours are used. Matthew 6:33 says we are to "*seek ye first the kingdom.*" Do you consider your priorities? The Lord gave all for us, and He desires that we prove the sincerity of our love for Him by our obedience (Matthew 10:34-39; Luke 14:26-35). We need to "*counteth the cost*" for true discipleship as well as remember the price that was paid for our redemption (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:22-33). If and when we do, we will never be guilty of asking the question, "Must I attend every assembly of the local church?" We will look forward to each assembly!

While it is true that Hebrews 10:23-25 has reference to those who were abandoning the Lord's way and returning to the old Hebrew religion, is it not also true that the first step toward such a total abandonment begins when one decides to miss the called assemblies of the local congregation when one has no justifiable reasons to do so? I think the answer is in the affirmative. Are you a worker in the local congregation of which you are a member (1 Corinthians 12:12-25; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-21)?

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