

What Do You Miss?

Introduction. As we begin a new year, we want to explore a troubling concern in every congregation in which I have been a part: attendance. In the beginning we need to understand why people do not attend. First, some have legitimate reasons and cannot attend. This is not the situation we are dealing with in this lesson. Nothing that is said today is intended to apply to those who by reason of sickness or other circumstances beyond their control are not able to attend. Second, some have a denominational background where they were led to believe that attendance is not important. They need instruction. Third, some are lukewarm. Some members have only ever come one service per week, and they have made very little spiritual progress. Others, perhaps more tragically, have waned from faithfulness in the past to a tepid attitude toward the Lord's assemblies.

The Bible makes it clear that those who fail to put Christ first have put something in that place (Matthew 6:33), and deprive themselves of several worthy benefits.

I. Information

- A. Classes at the building, special classes such as ladies' classes, sermons, bulletins, and home studies all help increase our knowledge and strengthen our conviction in what we already know (2 Peter 3:1; Jude 5).
- B. This information is like a flashlight for the journey in a dark, dark world (Psalm 119:105). If we take heed to the word, we do well (2 Peter 1:19). To identify the enemy, you must know about him (2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8) and the sin which he tempts us to commit (Romans 7:7).

II. Association

- A. The people dearest to God are there. Christ, our Savior, friend, brother, King, Shepherd, Door, and Mediator, is there. The earliest Christians were steadfast in fellowship with each other, a fellowship contextually shown to be spiritual in nature (Acts 2:42; Romans 1:12).
- B. Paul reminds us we should prefer one another, something we fail to show when we give preference to some other place and event (Romans 12:10; cp. Psalm 119:63; Zechariah 3:10; Malachi 3:13-16; Acts 1:4, 15; 2:44; 12:12; 14:27).

III. Edification

- A. We have a responsibility to be here and build up other Christians (Luke 22:32; Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 5:14). We need our spirits lifted and others need us to lift their spirits as well (Philippians 2:3-4).
- B. We obeyed Christ in order to be renewed (Ezekiel 18:31; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:23-24). This renewal continues throughout our lives (Psalm 51:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16). In worship we get our spiritual batteries charged so we can face the world. This is a "done together" activity in which those withholding their presence cannot engage.
- C. Furthermore, we often do what we know we should not do. As such, we need to be provoked, motivated, and stimulated to do what we already know is right

(Hebrews 10:24). Love for each other has a practical outcome, and wise words can serve as goads to push Christians to better service (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

IV. Immunization

- A. The world is infected with sin and it is hard to live for Christ. We can and do “inject” ourselves with strength at every service, an injection that will help us fight off the cancer of sin (Isaiah 1:5-6; Jeremiah 7:18; 1 John 5:19).
- B. Attending all the services strengthens our spiritual health (Psalm 42:11). Who thinks he or she is better equipped to fight alone than with the collective help of the church, as well as the special strength available by God’s design when we assemble together?

V. Jubilation

- A. There is nothing as miserable as the Christian who feels that it is his “duty” to come to the assemblies. It is a shame that Christians miss the excitement of baptisms and others who come forward for prayers, the encouragement of seeing new Christians participate in worship or young people demonstrating their faith, and the example of others whose words, actions, and attitudes make us glad we are Christians (Psalm 27:4; 84:10; 122:1).
- B. Few whose hearts and minds have been fully engaged in an assembly will walk away regretting it or being more depressed/discouraged than when they arrived (Nehemiah 10:39).

VI. Obligation

- A. We are mutually accountable (Romans 1:14; Colossians 3:13; Hebrews 3:13). We are indebted to God (Romans 8:12). We are commanded by Him to come together (Hebrews 10:25).
- B. None of these obligations come with an expiration date. We consider those who shirk their obligations to be irresponsible. What obligation outweighs the one laid on us by the Lord?

Conclusion. The numerous principles of scripture lead to an unavoidable conclusion. We should want to be together with Christ and His people at every opportunity. If we do not want this enough to make it happen, maybe something is deeply flawed with our “affections” (Colossians 3:1-2).