

MADRID CHURCH OF CHRIST

SUNDAY JANUARY 08, 2017



"PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, THAT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL" (EPHESIANS 6:11).

To Practicing Non-attenders (By George Hutto)

Some of our friends are persuaded that they can be Christians and not "go to church." Not knowing who they might be, I can only hope that they know I have their best interest at heart and that they will give me a hearing. The Lord would have everyone in the fold of safety – not almost, but altogether. (Acts 26:29; Mk 12:34) Those who think that they can be Christians and not attend church services are not there yet. They should consider these points:

1) You are a biblical anomaly. The New Testament has no example of a Christian who stays away from church. If we took the Ethiopian in Acts 8 to be such an example, let's look again. He was baptized on his way home from Jerusalem, a 1500 mile trip back to Ethiopia. Were there any other Christians back home? How could he assemble on Sundays if there were no other Christians?

First, there may well have been other baptized believers in his home at Ethiopia. On Pentecost, many thousands of devout Jewish proselytes (like him) “from every nation under heaven” were present, three thousand of whom became Christians. (Acts 2) There probably were other Christians close to home when the Eunuch was converted.

Second, this devout man, acquainted with the scriptures, who readily obeyed the gospel himself, would have converted others, making a local church which he could attend. The assumption that he kept his faith to himself and did not attend church services is not very tenable. The early Christians stuck together, and Christians should do so today. “Lone wolf” Christians is not a New Testament phenomenon. (Rom 14:7)

2) You are not fulfilling your Christian obligations. Do you think the instruction to “sing to one another” does not apply to you? (Eph 5:19) Is the practice of coming “together to break bread” not for every Christian, or are some of the folks exempt from the Lord’s command to “do this in remembrance me?” (Acts 20:7; Lk 22:19) Assembling is a matter of “communion” – fellowship – and the faithful are expected to be one of the fellows. Elders are charged with overseeing the sheep in the local group (1 Pet 5:1-3), so staying away from the local group makes a person outside the biblical arrangement. The most well-known passage that addresses the subject of attendance says, “Consider one another to incite to love and good works....” Non-attenders do not give encouragement, nor do they get it. (Heb 10:24-25)

3) The New Testament letters directed to local churches will be largely meaningless to you. Nine of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are letters to churches, and for those Christians not associated with churches, the warmth and heat of the message is lost.

For instance, the church at Corinth had problems with internal division, misbehavior during worship, and the failure to deal with immoral members in their midst. Non-attenders from that day might not have been plagued by those maladies, but neither were they the beneficiaries of the admonished church. The fellowship of unity, orderly and decent worship, the moral purity achieved by mutual burden-bearing groups; these things can never be experienced by those outside the local churches where “Christian group therapy” takes place. If the saying is

true that there is strength in numbers, then there is weakness in being alone. "A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment." (Prov 18:1) Consider the conclusion of Paul's affirmation of the Lord's return at Thessalonica: "Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess 4:18) The maverick sheep would never have received that comfort.

4) You have a serious problem with Hebrews 10:25. That passage says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb 10:25) The problem you have is with sheer disobedience.

Likely, to you "not going to church" may not seem as big a sin as murder, assault, or grand theft, but it is a transgression. There are many examples in the Bible of transgressors who minimized their sins by their own way of thinking. Eating the forbidden fruit in the garden is such an example. God took Eve's actions seriously. Moses struck the rock when he should have spoken. (Num 20) King Saul failed to obliterate the Amalekites. (1 Sam 15) King David did not move the ark of the covenant in the right fashion. (2 Sam 6) Ananias and his wife lied about a certain contribution they made to the church (not for gain, but for fame! Acts 5). Violating God's commands is a serious business. If the Bible teaches that Christians should go to church, that issue should be settled.

5) Your influence is leading people away from God. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim 3:15) It is that which glorifies God. (Eph 3:21) It is the kingdom of God on earth, the everlasting kingdom. (Heb 12:28) But your example is leading people away from the church, away from God.

If you have children, do you want them to learn about God? I would not count on the schools or the popular media to teach them. The Lord left the church with the responsibility to educate people about God, Christ, morals, hope for eternal life, and spiritual duty. If you want your children to learn about God and morals, guess where you should take them? If you read and study at home, good. Home-study for non-attenders is not very likely though, because the insight gained from Bible study will reinforce the need to assemble with the saints, as in the points above. The same

resistance to attend church services will cause a person to resist Bible study and devotionals at home. That attitude of defiance will influence family members and others in the wrong direction. There are Christians who cannot attend public worship who are hindered from being there because of severely bad health. There are places in the world where assembling in the name of Christ is illegal or made a target for persecution. Some people walk twelve miles to be at church, but sometimes they miss services. This article is not about them, bless their souls. This article is about people who should know better, but do not fulfill the obligations of faith. It is to those who have made laying out of church a practice.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. (James 4:17)

DAILY READING:

- 1/09 - Gen 29-31; Psalm 9
- 1/10 - Gen 32-34; Psalm 10
- 1/11 - Gen 35-37; Psalm 11
- 1/12 - Gen 38-40; Psalm 12
- 1/13 - Gen 41-42; Psalm 13
- 1/14 - Gen 43-45; Psalm 14
- 1/15 - Gen 46-47; Psalm 15

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

9AM



11AM

