

# Church Attendance



## Introduction:

As for churches that put a great deal of emphasis on **attendance**, it is probably because that is the main thing (and easy thing) they use to measure success or failure. Or perhaps it is because they think a believer is supposed to get everything they need from the sermon and the religious show on Sunday and perhaps a few other highly structured church meetings. **However, from a biblical point of view, the success or failure of the leadership should be measured by how the believers live, how they relate to each other and care for each other and how adept they become at making disciples themselves.** But how in the world can the leadership of the average church know what is really going on in the lives of the congregation if they are doing all the talking every week and if everyone else is way out “in the audience”? Therefore, how can they “gauge” the success of “their ministry” except by numbers of bodies in attendance.

## The point of assembling together:

The conventional church and what goes on when its “members” gather together is simply not of God. It may not be entirely sinful or completely unscriptural, but it does not adequately accomplish the task God sets before us: bearing one another’s burdens and making disciples (and all that entails such as evangelism and bible study, etc.). Conventional Christianity is patterned after false religions including the Catholic church. It is the invention of man and is patterned after man’s ideas of what religion is all about: impressing God, doing things for God, etc. It is the result of an incomplete reformation, one that reformed and restored the Gospel but did not do much about reforming or restoring ecclesiology. What God wants His children to do when they get together is for them to love one another...

John 13:34 - “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also **love one another**.”

John 13:35 - “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love one to another**.”

John 15:12 - “This is my commandment, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you.”

John 15:17 - “These things I command you, that ye **love one another**.”

Romans 12:10 - “**Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love**; in honour preferring one another;”

Romans 13:8 - "Owe no man any thing, but to **love one another**: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."

Galatians 5:13 - "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but **by love serve one another**."

Ephesians 4:2 - "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, **forbearing one another in love**;"

1 Thessalonians 3:12 - "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in **love one toward another**, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:"

1 Thessalonians 4:9 - "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **love one another**."

Hebrews 10:24 - "And let us **consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works**:"

1 Peter 1:22 - "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto **unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently**:"

1 Peter 3:8 - "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, **love as brethren**, be pitiful, be courteous:"

1 John 3:11 - "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should **love one another**."

1 John 3:23 - "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and **love one another, as he gave us commandment**."

1 John 4:7 - "Beloved, let us **love one another**: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

1 John 4:11 - "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to **love one another**."

1 John 4:12 - "No man hath seen God at any time. If we **love one another**, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

2 John 1:5 - "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that

we **love one another.**"

## **We are commanded to love one another:**

Are you surprised and even shocked at how many times we are commanded to love one another? I was. Yes, I know that loving one another is a big subject unto itself but in order for believers to truly express love for one another a lot of interaction is required in order for needs to be determined and for gifts to be put into practice. Try to love your husband or wife by interacting with him or her like you interact with the person 3 pews behind you every week - assuming you are not one of those "last row" attendees. ☐

## **God's kind of love is not easy:**

God's kind of love is not easy because it involves hard work and it takes quality time together as a church family. **And don't kid yourself. It doesn't happen any other way**, especially in this busy, fast-paced world we live in where it is hard enough to find the time to meet on Sunday, never mind visit a church member in their home during the week. The conventional church just does not provide the forum or the environment for relationship building to occur and yet the regular meetings of the church are often the only time that members of the local congregation see each other. The sad fact of the matter is that the leadership have set in place a structure that hinders and actually prevents people from really getting to know each other. It is a structure that is designed to maintain the status quo by actually insulating people FROM each other. Since you have a structure that prevents people from asking any questions, then the church creed or doctrinal statement never has to change. What a relief that is for the leadership. Also, when you don't interact much you never have to deal with the weaknesses of the flesh that your brothers and sisters in Christ AND YOU have. What a relief that is for both you and the leadership! How sad, really, because we are missing out on the gifts that God has given to ALL of His children, not just to a select few seminary trained, highly energetic and charismatic (and perhaps controlling) speakers who love preeminence. If they don't love preeminence then ask them why they are not spending time finding out who else in the congregation could be leading Bible studies or doing many of the other things they do. Of course the pastor is paid to do what he does so why should someone who is not paid do those things (except that maybe we should not have paid pastors... and church leaders should be delegating work and grooming future leaders rather than doing everything).

Another "advantage" of the easy conventional way of doing church is that it cuts down on the need for church discipline, reserving that "nasty" task for just monumental sins like adultery, which usually don't have to be dealt with either, because by then, the offending party has usually left "the church". He hasn't left the body of Christ, but we don't look at it that way, so we don't have to deal with the issue... we excuse ourselves from going

after them and confronting them by saying they left “the church” or “they withdrew their membership”. Or we make it easy on us and them by simply mailing them a letter telling them we will cancel their “membership” if they don’t repent. Meanwhile, we expect them to trust us and come back to the church that had no real personal involvement in their lives until it was time to kick them out. The only other “sins” a church might initiate some kind of discipline with would be those things the leaders can see from the pulpit like poor “attendance”, poor tithing, or gossip (complaining about the leaders - the pulpit popes - is what that usually means).

## The marriage analogy:

Let us now examine the stark contrast between God’s idea of a local church and man’s idea. Just look at these verses below. They are clearly a reference to the similarity of marriage relationship to the kind of deeply committed, heavily involved relationship that believers should have with one another in the local church:

Eph 5:28 - “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

## The conventional church - an unusual body - it only has a head:

Paul says the body of Christ has many members, not just a head...

1Cor 12:12 - “For 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. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

Similarly, the pastor cannot say to the congregation: "I have no need of thee except your tithes and offerings and for you to play Simon Says with me every Sunday, never correcting me or challenging my teachings or directing me to teach some other area of doctrine."

And the congregation cannot say to the pastor: "We have no need of anyone else in the congregation except the pastor and other leaders who do all the bible studying for us and make us feel like we have not forsaken the assembling of ourselves because we have 'participated' in the 'Simon-says Church-of-the-status-quo' on Sunday."

Rather we need to look at the rest of the passage from 1 Corinthians 12:

1Cor 12:22 "Nay, much more **those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary**: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That **there should be no schism in the body**; but that **the members should have the same care one for another**. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

And then we need to realize that this is saying we are supposed to be in an environment that allows us to really get to know each other and get involved in ministering to one another and discipling one another. AMEN?

## **A structure that nurtures or one that encourages schisms:**

Does a church that allows the pastor to do everything (plan, structure and control everything that believers do when they get together), create a schism between the leadership and the poor ordinary pew warmers? It sure does. It creates a caste system with the leadership viewed as all-knowing untouchables and the rest of the folks just ignorant tithe payers who need someone to make them feel part of a Sunday morning religious club.

Does a church that treats "official members" differently than members that have not "joined up" create a schism between those that are "in" and those that are "out"? Should we be figuring out who is a member by whether or not they took some classes and signed some forms? Or rather, should we be figuring out who is a member by spending enough quality time, interactive time, together with them so that we know if they really are sinners who have been saved by the grace of God?

And do we want a “system” of membership in place that creates an artificial wall between us and believers who happen to fellowship elsewhere? God wants His children to be of “the same mind”:

2Cor 1:10 - “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in **the same mind** and in the same judgment.”

## Concluding remarks:

Lastly, are you a member of Christ’s church? Are you truly saved? If so, are you concerned enough about the local body of Christ and what the Bible says about what your relationship to them should be, to jettison the unscriptural “Simon-says” conventional church show and start worshipping God in spirit and in truth? When God says “love one another” are you going to continue to play church instead and continue to convince yourself that the church of the status quo is really what God was speaking of when He called the church a family (Eph. 3:15) and the household of faith (Gal. 6:10)? The unsaved are noted for their temples of worship, their focus on buildings and on the outward appearances of religion. Should the children of the living God be indistinguishable from them or should they rather be obviously different by virtue of their distaste for outward religiosity and their love for the things that really matter?

Matthew 23:27-28 - “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

Matthew 24:1-2 - “And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

1 Sam 16:7 - “But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

Luke 16:15 - “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

We may think that where we worship and what we do when we get together is

not really all that important. But it most certainly is. Conventional ways of doing church enable us to hide in the crowd and hide behind superficial relationships. Whereas in churches meeting in the intimacy of the home where there is lots of interaction, everyone can easily find opportunities to use their gifts. And yes, we will soon find everyone's rough edges and imperfections coming to the surface, reminding us that we are not alone in our struggles with sin in us and around us.

***“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” [John 13:35]***

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