

Why Assemble?

Marshall Reid

While I was at Florida College, I'm ashamed to say that there were times that I and others attended the "Mattress Springs church of Christ". That's the church of sleeping in on Sunday morning. Unfortunately, many people feel that attending the Bible classes and worship assemblies are optional. I rationalized skipping services because I only had 2-3 hours of sleep and needed more than that to function properly. Others may justify it by pointing to the fact that the weekend is the only time they have to get things done and to rest, especially since the week is chock full of activities like little league practice, soccer practice, piano lessons, band practice, homework, and science projects.

Maybe the reason some don't come is because they just don't get anything out of the classes or services anymore. Maybe the Bible class teacher just can't teach very well and it makes you wonder why he was chosen in the first place. Maybe the new preacher trainee can't preach very well. We can all make excuses for not doing something. But allow me to give three reasons why we need to assemble, eliminating any excuses in the process.

First, we're commanded to assemble. No, God didn't directly command us saying, "Thou shalt assemble every Sunday." But the Hebrew writer said we are not to forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25). That's as good as a direct command since he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. If we truly want to follow the example of the early Christians in all that we do, and if we truly want to be pleasing to the Lord, then we won't find ourselves making excuses for not coming to services. The command from Hebrews really should be all we need to convince us of the necessity of assembling, but there are also two very practical reasons I'll point out.

We exhort one another. Assembling with the saints allows us the opportunity to encourage one another, help each other, and uplift each other. If we're not together, how can we "*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works*" (Heb. 10:24)? We all need encouragement, and if you ever get the feeling that you just don't want to go to services, that's the time you need to go the most! That way, you receive the encouragement you need to keep going. And in turn, you help me and everyone else just by your presence.

We grow spiritually. One of the best benefits of assembling with the saints is the spiritual growth that we all receive. The first church "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). Sure, you can study the Bible on your own at home, pray at home, even partake of the Lord's Supper at home, but a good portion of our spiritual growth happens during the Bible classes and worship assemblies. Part of it has to do with the encouragement we receive as I just pointed out. But part of it also has to do with studying with others, learning from others. I can't tell you how many times I've studied a particular passage or topic and thought I thoroughly understood it until I heard a point made by another that I never considered. From discussion in Bible classes and from sermons presented, we see things in a new light. Thoughts are further explained and difficult passages become easier. Applications to our present lives are made and suddenly the Scriptures become even more relevant.

Not only do we grow spiritually, but we help others grow. There will always be someone who can help us grow, and there will always be someone whom we can help grow. We're a family, a body, which means we're concerned with each member. We need to be concerned with the growth of all, not just ourselves.

All of these principles extend to the Bible classes as well. If there's one thing that I will never understand, it's why people do not come to the Bible classes when they have the ability to do so. I understand there are circumstances which prevent people from attending on a regular basis, mainly health issues. However, the same people who can make it to worship services, work, or school somehow can't make it to Bible classes. Bible classes afford us the opportunity to nourish our spiritual health. Without the benefit of these classes, it is easy to become malnourished and atrophied.

If we truly want to love and serve God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength (Mark 12:30), then we'll make every effort to assemble with the saints, no matter how inconvenient, no matter how bad the Bible class teacher is, no matter how bad the preaching is. The Lord knew what he was doing when he told us to assemble. Let's encourage one another. Let's grow spiritually together. Let's help each other get to heaven.