

The Importance of Faithful Attendance

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“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 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” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

This well-known commandment makes it very clear what our responsibility is when it comes to assembling with the saints. Faithful attendance is a direct command and we should desire to gather together with those of like precious faith to worship and praise our Lord. But we can also glean from this scripture what the spiritual benefits are for those who participate on a regular basis.

Stir up love - What better place is there to give love to others and also receive love from our brothers and sisters in Christ? True love will manifest itself when given the opportunity. When we gather with the saints we avail ourselves of genuine love that comes through Godly association one with another.

Stir up good works - Every service includes announcements where our elders disseminate information to us regarding the needs of our members, their families, and their friends. What better way is there to stir up good works? We are given what is necessary to address these needs, both spiritual and physical.

Exhorting one another - Living in an ungodly world in which temptations are heaped upon us on a regular basis certainly takes its toll. The amount of time we spend receiving Godly exhortation pales in comparison to the time that Satan hurls fiery darts of sin in our direction day in and day out. Why pass up any opportunity we might have to receive the heavenly reinforcement our brothers and sisters in Christ can provide?

The spiritual benefits are clear enough, but what about the mental and physical benefits of regular attendance? I believe we all recognize the fact that we feel better in many ways after attending services, but what do secular studies have to say in this regard? Below is some information that may help us understand just what those benefits are.

Going to church improves health - Tyler J. VanderWeele, with the Harvard School of Public Health, conducted a study of regular church-goers over two decades. He found that people who attend religious services, at least once a week, enjoy better blood pressure, healthier cardiovascular, immune and endocrine functions and less coronary artery disease than those who don't attend at all. In addition, the risk of dying is 20 to 30 percent less in the 10 and a half years after they begin going to church regularly, the study found. “Something about the communal religious experience and participation matters,” as opposed to private spirituality or practice, VanderWeele wrote in USA Today. “Something powerful appears to take place there, and enhances health.”

Frequent churchgoers have a larger social circle - “Strong friendships and social support have a direct correlation with better health,” writes T.M. Luhrmann, a Stanford anthropologist who has studied evangelical churches. And the support provided by church can be both emotional and practical. Luhrmann describes what happened at a weekly Bible study she attended: “One evening, a young woman in a group I joined began to cry. Her dentist had told her that she needed a \$1,500 procedure, and she didn’t have the money,” she writes. “To my amazement, our small group—most of them students—simply covered the cost, by anonymous donation.”

People who go to services regularly are less likely to be depressed - A survey of nearly 100,000 women over 50 who attended religious services found they were 56 percent more likely to have a positive outlook on life and 27 percent less likely to be depressed, according to a study in the Journal of Religion and Health. Eliezer Schnall, the study’s author and an associate professor at Yeshiva University in New York, writes that regular religious practice can help foster a “positive worldview, include calming rituals, and have other psychological and social benefits.”

Teens who regularly attend church do better in school - Researchers at the University of Iowa found that the GPA of teens who attend services on a weekly basis was .144 higher than those who never attended services, according to the study published in Sociological Quarterly. They studied students from seventh grade to seniors in high school. The study identified several factors that account for the academic boost, according to Live Science. Churchgoing teens encounter adults of various ages who serve as role models and are more likely to talk with their friends’ parents. They also strike up friendships with kids who share similar values and are more likely to participate in extracurricular activities.

To a great extent those who attend worship and practice religious convictions will live healthier and safer lifestyles than those who do not. However, the most compelling reason is our desire to worship our God, remember the death of our Savior upon the cross, and to avail ourselves of the spiritual benefits of assembling together. So faithfully attend church services... the benefits are clear!