

Our title question pertains to the assembly of the saints that we are all a part of presently. Why do you come to worship services? I really would like us all to consider some answers, so imagine I gave everyone a piece of paper. Across the top is this question: "Why do I go to worship services?" You are asked to list the Top 5 Reasons.

I can't speak for everyone, but perhaps some of these 5 responses might make your list:

- 1) **I want to worship God** *(A pretty solid start. This may even be a consensus #1)*
- 2) **I am thankful for Jesus** *(After all, part of our service is the memorial to His death)*
- 3) **I enjoy the People** *(And so you should. Relationships are what local churches are all about)*
- 4) **I like to learn the Bible** *(We strive with classes and sermons to teach the Word above all else)*
- 5) **I believe it is God's Will** *(While we may differ on how far to take this, we all feel compelled)*

This looks like a good list that covers most of the bases, would you agree? It has its merits, but suffers from a fatal flaw: do you see it? This list has a serious Pronoun Problem: **I**. While the list includes references to God, Jesus, Christians, and the Bible; they are indirect subjects. The subject is **I**.

Now there is merit in each and every one of us wanting to do all of the things listed here, but if all of my worship is based on what I "**want,**" "**am thankful for,**" "**enjoy,**" "**like,**" and "**believe,**" then it is no wonder that local churches have dwindling attendance, and particularly during evening services.

You see, if it is all about me, when it comes to 6:00pm tonight, all I have to do is inject one word in these sentences, and I can easily justify staying home. What is that word? "**Don't.**" The process of going to Bible classes and worship is a subjective one, so what I want trumps everything else.

This is not the way the New Testament describes faithful Christians.

**Acts 2:22** – "Jesus"

**Acts 2:32** – "God" raised "Jesus"

**Acts 2:33** – "the Holy Spirit"

**Acts 2:36** – "Lord and Christ"

**Acts 2:38-40** – Yes, "we" matter. But only because of what Father, Son and Holy Spirit have done for us.

**Acts 2:46-47** – The brethren did things. Great things. Why? "I..." No. "God" and "the People."

*Have you ever heard the old saying, "**for God and Country**"? Americans often use this phrase, but it originates with the British. It means all that they do is to further the purpose of God and the purpose of their people. A soldier who lived for God and Country would certainly care for himself and be directed in some part by his own will and wants, but would have far loftier goals than personal ambitions and emotional inclinations. He would give his life for the cause of God and those he loved.*

Look at our list above once more. I don't see **Acts 2:46-47** here, do you? Let's maintain the spiritual goodness and integrity of this list, but let's shuffle some Subjects and Nouns and see if we can make a list that reflects a faithful Christian's attitude toward worship, and maybe it will shape our habits also.

### 1. The Father is Worthy of my Attention

- a. The Bible begins with "In the Beginning God..." and maybe we should as well.
- b. **Acts 17:22-23** – They did not know the God of heaven and their actions bore that out.
- c. **Acts 17:24-29** – This is your great and worthy Creator and Sustainer whom you seek.
- d. **Acts 17:30-31** – No more time for aimless, or selfish foolishness. Go to Him.
- e. Perhaps worship should be seen as an expression of God's "WORTHINESS." How worthy is He for 4 hours of your 168 hour week to be the focus of an assembly or study?
- f. By the way: I dare you to add a negative to this point: "Not worthy." When it is about God and not just about me, I will not and will never opt out of proclaiming His worth.

### 2. Jesus Deserves to see my Sacrifice

- a. Here is a little "rubber meets road" moment. Lots of folks make worship about HABIT or COMFORT, instead of SACRIFICE. They go when it is easy or convenient or fits the schedule. And when it demands more of them, they pass, in the name of grace.
- b. **Philippians 2:6-11** – First we look to Jesus and recognize that He gave all for us.
- c. **Philippians 2:1-5** – Then we see that spirit prescribed toward His family, the church.
- d. **Philippians 2:12-13** – Then we see what it produces in us as we seek to honor God.

- e. And now we look to worship. A place where we recognize and celebrate the selflessness and sacrifice of Jesus. A time when we give ourselves to the support of His people and fearfully and reverently lay down our attention and time at the altar of His praise.
- f. **Philippians 2:21** – The world is full of people like this. But what about Christians?
- g. I dare you once again to add a negative to this point. He “doesn’t” deserve my evening’s attention in worship or mid-week service to His cause...

### 3. God’s People are Entitled to my Support

- a. “*Entitled*” – Now that’s a game changing word, isn’t it? When God established the church, He made a covenant to the people in this room that they will always have a family they can count on, people who will make them better.
- b. **Hebrews 10** – The “infamous” **Hebrews 10:25**. I’m not going to read it. I’m just going to leave it out of this point and sermon. It is not the point in this text. But I do want you to consider other things the writer said about our commitment to one another:
  - i. **3:12-14** – “encourage one another day after day”
  - ii. **4:1-2, 11, 14-16** – “let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace”
  - iii. **10:19-24** – “let us consider how to stimulate one another...”
- c. We’ve all heard “there is no ‘I’ in team.” We are a team and we need each other. Someone will say, “hey, we don’t have to be at Wednesday worship to be a team.” Perhaps not, but the strength of a team lies in our willingness to do the right thing and do it together.
- d. Oh, and I dare you to look at the person next to you, start a chat about tonight’s worship hour, and add the word “NOT” to the middle of this point.

### 4. The Spirit is the Treasure of my Life

- a. This is a far cry from: “I like to study the Bible.” This isn’t about what I like to read or study. This is about what I have the privilege to gather together with you to read and study!
- b. In Acts 2, they were in awe of the Holy Spirit’s work through the Apostles. Are you? This word is the full evidence and substance of the work the Holy Spirit has done for you and me.
- c. **II Timothy 1:13-14** – Paul called this word, the Truth, the Holy Spirit’s work: the TREASURE.
- d. **II Timothy 2:1-2** – People loved to hear it, learn it, and even teach it to others.
- e. **II Timothy 2:8-9** – Some gave everything, even life itself, for the right to love and live it.
- f. And here we are, meeting but a few hours per week, under great comfort and safety, to celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit, to treasure it, to study it and discuss it and use it.
- g. Dare I add the word “NOT” to this bold truth about the Spirit? My worship will tell the story.

If we have been itching to sneak a negative term, a NOT, into any of these points, effectively denying someone:

### 5. This World is not my Home

- a. Sometimes worship is less about whom we are choosing and more about whom we are denying! When an option exists between God and His people vs. the World. I chose you.
- b. **Joshua 24:15** – “*Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...*” What an awesome moment. A moment when they decided who and what life was all about. A choice.
- c. **Matthew 6:19-20, 24** – Praise be to God that Christ has allowed us to make that same choice, bring glory to God over the world, every single day we live. Worship services is just one example, but oh how important it is that we choose worship over the world!
- d. We are strangers and aliens here. This world is not our home. Thank you God for giving us local oversight, an eldership, who have set aside at least three family times per week when we can tell our friends, show our neighbors, teach our ball coaches, that we live here but for there, and church services are a vitally important place where we announce that choice!
- e. Please, keep the “NOT” in this point, and then, tonight, prove it to the God who believes in you.

**Conclusion:** We started with a list of 5 things that all began with “I.” We then looked at 5 reasons to be faithful to worship that center on Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and God’s people. In the end what we have made, and what I submit to you is a TOP 10 list, where personal and emotional attachment is important, falling purposely behind those around and above us.

When we’ve been there 10,000 years, I hope God lets us remember days like this one, and lessons like this, and the way each of us intimate and apply it. Perhaps some of us will say: “I can remember the days when my worship and service hinged on what I felt and wanted. And I remember the day when I found my true purpose: God and His People. And look at us now.”