

## Why Should I Attend?

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This world offers an abundance of activities in which to involve ourselves. Some of us enjoy various kinds of sports and sometimes participate either in recreational leagues or compete in school; sports, such as baseball, racquetball, tennis, soccer, football, volleyball, golf, or softball. We all have an assortment of hobbies and interests that we make time for in our schedules, such as sewing, scrapbooking, woodworking, fishing, birdwatching, reading, gardening, painting, video games, or playing music. Some teenagers view sleeping as a hobby.

Whenever something is especially enjoyable to us, we make time to engage in those pursuits, even postponing other things that need to be done because these interests are more captivating and more fun. However, there are many Christians who will make time for fulfilling their own desires of pleasurable activities but will make excuses when it's time to attend the Bible classes and worship services. Or maybe they will commit to working during these times instead of attending the services. After all, it's work, and work is important. Supporting ourselves and our family is commanded by God, is it not? The point is that often times Christians find something else to do that is more important to them at the time than assembling with the saints. But what could be more important than assembling with the saints?

Granted, there are times in which unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances keep us from attending the services. But when we make a conscious decision to do something else rather than be at services, then that may betray a need for an adjustment in our priorities. God's design for the local church includes regularly meeting together, and he had very good reasons for this plan. If we let other things get in the way of attending the services, we miss out on so much that God has planned for us to experience as a local body and as a family. There are many reasons to attend, but I want to offer two for your consideration.

**Attending services helps us stay on the straight and narrow path.** Just like a misaligned vehicle will pull either to the left or the right instead of going straight, when we have our priorities misaligned, we find ourselves straying to the left or the right instead of staying on the path that leads to righteousness. We miss out on the instruction we receive from the Bible classes and the preaching. We miss out on the discussion of God's will for us and the insights into his word that others can supply. We miss out on the admonishments contained within the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that we sing. We miss out on the prayers that help us stay focused on our relationship to God. We miss out on the Lord's Supper that reminds us of the precious blood that was shed to cleanse our souls of our sins.

These blessings that we enjoy when we are at services help us in our daily fight against the pull of the world. We can take the instruction, the admonishments, the prayers, and the reminders and use them to stay strong each week as temptations come upon us. But we don't have that advantage if we're not at services.

**Attending services helps us keep our faith strong.** When Elijah was running for his life from Ahab and Jezebel, he hid in a cave and was very depressed because of Israel's condition and unfaithfulness. He said to God, *"I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."* However, God's answer to him was, *"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him"* (1 Kings 19:10, 18). Elijah felt all alone; that there was no one else who wanted to serve God.

Those Israelites faithful to Jehovah in Elijah's day were certainly in the minority, just as Christians are in the minority today. But we don't have to feel the despair that Elijah felt, for we know we are not alone. We have an abundance of brethren that are trying to please God and remain faithful to him. That should bolster our confidence and faith and encourage us to continue pressing toward the goal. If we choose to do something other than attend services, we are chipping away at our own fortress of faith. We're weakening the walls of defense that can be made stronger through our attendance and fellowship with our fellow warriors. That leaves us open to the attacks the world will no doubt assail upon us relentlessly.

God knew that we needed each other, that we can't make it on our own. Therefore, he designed the local church to be a source of encouragement to us, to help make us stalwarts in the faith. By drawing upon the faith of our brethren, our own faith grows. By leaning upon them when we are weak, we become strong.

Why let inconsequential matters come between us and attending the services? We have everything to gain by attending and everything to lose by not attending. In Matt. 6, Jesus explains the importance of having a priority alignment. He says we can't let the things of this world get in our way, and we can't let the worry of providing for ourselves get in the way. Rather, we need to *"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"* (Matt. 6:33). Part of that seeking includes attending services and assembling with the saints.