

Why Not Skip Church Meetings?

By Jim Elliff



More evangelicals skip church meetings than attend them. That's a fact . . . an embarrassing one. One leader claims even the FBI could not find many of them.

Some churches have decided to take action to recover the inactive only to find that their church rolls were filled with people who never intend to come again, moved to

other states, or died. I once removed 700 people from a church when I first became its pastor — people who simply did not care enough to talk with us.

Why should we bother? Is it really important for professing Christians to be active in their churches? Here are three reasons to believe it IS important:

1. *Not attending is a bad habit.* That's the way the writer of Hebrews puts it: “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the habit of some” (10:25).

You have a habit of going to work or to school because you made a once-for-all-time decision. You don't wake up each day and say, “Should I go to work?” No, you have the habit because you have decided, “I go to work EVERY day without exception, unless I'm on vacation, legitimately sick, or near death.” If you don't make this once-for-all-time decision, excuses are made which sound reasonable at first, but soon seem lame even to yourself.

2. *We need each other.* The writer of Hebrews says that we are to “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds . . . encouraging one another . . .” (10:24-25). He puts this in the context of assembling. Of course he does. It is impossible to adequately encourage others without being face to face with them. Absent people forfeit their best option for giving and receiving encouragement.

It is discouraging when members are not attending! Their gifts and talents are missed, their love is only a memory, and their influence is nonexistent. In some cases they become essentially unknown, especially by new believers who need a model of faithfulness from those who profess faith in Christ. We are weaker as a whole body when people do not attend.

Perhaps absent people think they are strong enough to handle missing, and that not being in attendance makes little difference. They are wrong. These people become the family member who never eats with the family, never talks to the family, and never shows and receives love from the family. In reality, this is such a huge loss that it is impossible to calculate.

3. *The Day is coming.* The writer of Hebrews gives another reason to meet regularly together — “not forsaking our own assembling together . . . and all the more as you see the day drawing near, for if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (10:25). In other words, there is no other sacrifice than the one Jesus offers. If you turn from that in various ways, and turn back to the life you had (a life not faithfully identifying with Christ), only judgment awaits you.

He anticipates this judgment on “the day” in part for those who forsake the church meetings. The connection is startling. They are said to be people who “insult the Spirit of grace” (10:29). The author assumes that failure to love the church and fully identify with Christ leaves people in an awful predicament before God since they open themselves up to much more sin by disconnecting from what Christianity is all about.

Hear now the full instruction from Scripture, and reconsider just how important it is to attend your church gatherings regularly:

“And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”