

The Christian's Attitude Toward The Assemblies Of The Local Church



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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The Christian's Attitude Toward The Assemblies Of The Local Church

Introduction

A. What is your attitude toward the assemblies of the local church? That is, what is your mindset toward the times the local church you are a member of meets together? Do you make every effort to be in attendance? Or, do you fail to make the proper effort to attend?

B. The local church is part of God's plan for His people and one key responsibility of the local church is assembling on a regular basis (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:23, 26).

C. Local churches are expected to assemble on the first day of the week (Sunday) – as indicated in Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-2. However, local churches are not limited to assembling only at these times (Acts 2:46).

D. As we discuss the Christian's responsibility to being present at these assemblies of the local church, I want to acknowledge there are some things beyond a person's ability to control.

1. For example, sickness or caring for another who is sick may cause you to miss at times. Or, perhaps your responsibility to work requires you to miss periodically.

2. Even in these, I want to urge you to think carefully about what you can control versus what you cannot. And, recognize there are many things people choose above assembling (i.e. sports, hobbies, family activities, unnecessary overtime, a job that you know will consistently cause you to miss when there are better options, etc.).

E. Purpose: To learn how God expects Christians to view the assemblies of the local church and to make attending those assemblies a priority.

1. Why The Assemblies Of The Church Are Important

A. They are opportunities to worship God collectively

1. God wants people to worship Him in the right way (John 4:23-24).

2. Although Christians can and should worship God outside the assemblies of the church, these are collective opportunities to worship God with his/her brothers and sisters.

- There are five specific activities God has authorized for the local church to worship Him during these assemblies: Singing (Ephesians 5:19), praying (1 Corinthians 14:15), teaching (Acts 20:7), the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), and the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Each of these activities accomplishes a significant purpose in worshiping God!

3. The Christian's focus must be on joyfully and gladly giving God the worship He deserves – focusing on God instead of on self (Psalm 122:1)!

- How glad are you to attend the worship assemblies of the local church? Do you anticipate or dread them?
- The worship assemblies of the local church must not be viewed as being burdensome (1 John 5:3). Actually, if you do not enjoy worshipping God with others now, you will not enjoy Heaven!

B. They are opportunities for Christians to be built up in the faith

1. God knows there are many things that try to pull every Christian away from serving Him with joy and gladness – that we are under regular attacks from Satan. It is easy, then, for our spiritual “batteries” to become drained.

- We can easily become weary in our attempts to serve God and discouraged by all the ungodliness around us. Therefore, God knew His people would need avenues through which their “fires” for serving Him can be rekindled.

2. The assemblies are a primary avenue through which God has authorized the local church to be edified (built up in the faith).

- This concept is frequently found in 1 Corinthians 14. Although the specific context deals with miraculous spiritual gifts, the applications about edification hold true today (vv. 3, 4, 12, 17, 26).

3. God's wisdom has designed these assemblies for the purpose of worshiping Him and strengthening Christians. As a Christian, then, you must recognize the importance of every assembly!

- Although being “faithful” to God must not be defined solely by one’s attendance to the assemblies, you should now see that attendance is involved in your faithfulness.

2. The Necessity Of Attending The Assemblies Of The Church

A. You have joined the local church

1. God’s word demonstrates the necessity of attending the assemblies of the church. However, please understand that I am speaking of situations that are within an individual’s ability to control. So, if you miss any of the assemblies, you need to determine whether your absence is due to a situation outside of your control or not.

2. To fully appreciate the necessity of attending the assemblies of the local church, you need to understand what the local church is. It is a group of Christians who have joined themselves together in a local geographic area for the purpose of working for God and worshipping together (i.e. church in Thessalonica).

3. If you have joined a local church, you have made an agreement to work and worship together with those brothers and sisters – and part of that agreement is to assemble.

- 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Ephesians 4:16 demonstrate the importance of every member of the local church doing his/her part – comparing them to members of the physical body.
- You must do your part to attend the assemblies. Imagine if an athlete chose to only attend some of the team’s practices and games (picking and choosing according to his/her own will). That player would demonstrate he/she is not devoted to the team!

4. Every time the Scriptures speak of a local church assembling, the implication is that the members of that church were present!

- Are you doing your part in these assemblies? Or, are you forcing your brothers and sisters to do the work and carry on the worship without you?

B. Hebrews 10:24-25

1. Consider the connection between encouraging one another (your Christian brothers and sisters) and assembling/meeting together. Although you should do this outside the congregational meetings also, these do provide opportunities for encouragement.

- Seriously consider the answer to these questions: Am I stimulating my brethren to love and good works when I am at a ballgame instead of the assembly? Am I encouraging my brethren when I go to a school function or family activity instead of assembling? Am I really helping my brethren live for the Lord when I choose unnecessary overtime rather than worshipping God with them? We communicate to our brethren in all these decisions that something else is more important to us than assembling with them!

2. There is a clear commandment from God in this passage to not neglect (forsake) assembling/meeting together, as some had been guilty of doing.

- Some believe that they are not guilty of neglecting the assembling of the brethren as long as they attend periodically or only miss occasionally.

3. I challenge you to tell me how many assemblies God is okay with you willfully neglecting – and to provide Biblical support for your answer.

- Can a person please God and willfully neglect 100% of the assemblies? 75%? 50%? 25%? 10%? 1%? 1 assembly? What is permissible – according to the Scriptures?
- You must be confident enough in your answer that you are willing to stand before God and answer for your actions! And, it is not good enough to say you *feel* or *believe* God is please with you. Rather, you must prove it by the Bible!

4. Every time you willfully neglect one assembly, you willfully abandon your brethren on that occasion (even though you may desire to come together again).

- How many times would a coach be ok with a player willfully neglecting to show up for a game? How many nights could a husband willfully neglect to come home to his wife? Why, then, are many Christians okay with abandoning their brethren on occasion in situations they can control?

C. The responsibility to submit

1. The Christian has the responsibility to submit to both the elders and his/her brethren (as long as submitting to them does not result in violating God's will). To submit is to yield to and place yourself under another. This also impacts the assemblies.

2. If the congregation has elders, they have been given the great responsibility to shepherd the members of the local church and lead in ways that are pleasing to God – and you must submit to them (1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17).

- The elders will be influential in determining the assembly times for the local church. The responsibility to submit to them means that the members will do everything they can to be present when the elders call the church to assemble! A failure to do so is a failure to submit to them.

3. If the congregation does not have elders, the church still must agree on certain times to assemble – and you must submit to those decisions (Ephesians 5:21).

- Just because a church does not have elders does not mean no decisions get made or there is no accountability. A submissive spirit should be demonstrated by all concerning when the church is called to assemble! A failure to do so is a failure to submit to your brethren.

D. The need to demonstrate care for your brethren

1. The issue of attending the assemblies is about more than your own personal growth and faithfulness to God. Rather, the assemblies also serve the purpose of helping to build up your brothers and sisters in the faith.

2. Consider Romans 12:4-5. You are a member of your brethren! Their spiritual well-being should be very important to you, and you must take an active interest in opportunities to build them up in the faith (including the assemblies of the church).

- How are you demonstrating care if you are choosing not to be present? How are you demonstrating your love for them? Aren't you actually demonstrating they are not as important to you as whatever else you have chosen to do? Aren't you choosing to withhold the encouragement you could give them if you would have assembled?

3. It is discouraging to see a brother or sister's seat left vacant during an assembly and find out that person *chose* not to be present! Satan uses that empty seat to discourage those present!

E. The responsibility to set the right priorities

1. The problem of willfully neglecting the assemblies often stems from a deeper heart problem (Matthew 15:19). One common heart problem that manifests in the form of willfully neglecting to

assemble is a failure to have the right commitment and failing to seek God's righteousness and kingdom first (Matthew 6:19-21, 33).

2. How you choose to spend your time will speak loudly about your priorities. The reason you choose to spend your time doing one thing above another is because you see it as a greater priority at that time (or something that is more necessary at that moment).

- You must step back from your own life and look objectively at the decisions you have made to see where your treasure is! Is it on pursuing earthly things or is it set on whole-heartedly seeking God's righteousness and kingdom first?

3. Are you really demonstrating that God is first in every area of your life? In the job you take? In where you choose to live? In the hobbies and extracurricular activities you involve yourself and your family in? In the vacations you take? With your family and friends? When you make out your (and your family's) schedule for the week? In where you go to college? Whether you do all you can to faithfully assemble is one factor that will help make your priorities known!

F. The responsibility to set the right example

1. The decisions you make will communicate what is most important to people around you. So, they will either learn that God comes first and everything and everyone else takes a back seat or they will learn something else.

2. Matthew 5:13-16. For better or worse, others are watching Christians. What message are you sending them through the way you live (i.e. about assembling)?

- Are you teaching that God always comes first or that a person can claim to be a Christian and then disobey what He says about assembling?

3. Consider each of the following groups of people and the lessons you are teaching regarding your assembling. Every time the local church assembles, you are teaching someone!

- Are you teaching your brethren how you love them and will sacrifice to assemble with them or that selfishness is okay and that they are not as important as other things? Are you teaching new converts the importance of making sacrifices to assemble or that Christians can willfully neglect those assemblies? Are you teaching your children to put God first above everything or that it is okay to disobey God to do things you would rather

do? Are you teaching unbelievers to take God seriously or that they do not need to fear God?

G. It is the right thing to do

1. Assembling with the church is the right thing to do! But, can you ever name a situation when willfully neglecting to assemble is the right thing to do – based on Scripture?

2. James 4:17. As we have seen, God expects each Christian who is able to assemble with the church. Therefore, God calls it sin to know what God wants and then not do it!

3. Hebrews 10:26-39 (immediately following the passage about neglecting to assemble). Willfully sinning after receiving the knowledge of truth results in serious consequences and amounts to trampling the Son of God underfoot, counting His blood as a common thing, and insulting the grace God has shown. But, drawing back from Christ in this way will result in destruction!

- Knowing your responsibility to faithfully attend the assemblies of the local church and then willfully neglecting to assemble is sin – and sin is serious (Romans 6:23)!

Conclusion

A. Has this lesson described your attitude toward the assemblies of the local church? Are you committed to obeying God in this area of your life?

B. Realize that every time the church assembles presents a choice for you. And, like every choice you make in life, God is watching and will hold you accountable (2 Corinthians 5:10). You must work out your salvation with fear and trembling concerning how you approach the assemblies of the church (Philippians 2:12)!

C. God has designed the assemblies of the local church as an important and essential part of worshiping Him, pleasing Him, and growing in the faith. Do not willfully neglect any of these assemblies!

Study Questions

Must the local church assemble together? When does the local church you are a member of assemble together? Should you be present at these times?

1. Why The Assemblies Of The Church Are Important

How are the assemblies of the local church opportunities to worship God?

How are the assemblies of the local church opportunities for Christians to be built up in the faith?

2. The Necessity Of Attending The Assemblies Of The Church

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because you have joined the local church.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because of Hebrews 10:24-25.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because of your responsibility to submit.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary in order to demonstrate care for your brethren.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because of the responsibility to set the right priorities.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because of the responsibility to set the right example.

Explain how attendance to the assemblies is necessary because it is the right thing to do.

