

Why We Assemble

The Scriptures demonstrate it is God's will for Christians to be actively engaged with a local church (i.e. Acts 9:26-28). Given that local churches are part of God's plan for His people, then, we must consider the place God has made for assembling as a church. For, the Scriptures show that the local church is expected to come together (assemble) in one place. Unfortunately, these assemblies are not always viewed with the proper degree of importance God has given them. So, let's consider some reasons why we assemble as a local church.

1) To obey God. Assembling as a local church is necessary to obey God (unless a person is truly unable to assemble). If there were no other reasons for why a local church should assemble, this one would be more than sufficient to make the point. First, we know that God wants churches to assemble because of direct commands that are given concerning them (1 Corinthians 11:33-34; 14:23, 26; Hebrews 10:24-25). Second, we know that God wants churches to assemble because of approved examples that are given concerning them (Acts 2:42, 46; 12:5, 12; 20:7). While the local church may assemble at various times as the church may decide (Acts 2:42, 46), God has revealed a specific responsibility for the local church to assemble on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Then, recognize that since the local church is a collection of individual Christians who have joined themselves together according to God's design, the church only assembles whenever the members of the church make the effort to gather at the designated place and time. And, God has commanded Christians not to neglect/forsake/abandon the assembling of the church (Hebrews 10:24-25). Therefore, to assemble as a church is to obey God and to refuse to assemble is sin (James 4:17)!

2) To worship God with other Christians. To worship is to prostrate yourself before God,

bowing humbly before Him (i.e. in your heart) to praise Him. Consider some pictures of worship given in the Scriptures (Matthew 28:9; Revelation 4:9-11; 5:8-14). Worshiping God, then, is a great privilege that has been afforded to those who acknowledge the greatness of God and are thankful for what He has done to save them! It is certainly God's desire that His people devote themselves to worshiping Him (John 4:21-24). This worship involving His people can happen anywhere and at any time (i.e. even from prison, Acts 16:25). However, while God desires His people to worship Him privately, there is also clear evidence that God desires His people to worship Him while they meet together. For example, God commands Christians to sing to Him with other Christians (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Furthermore, the Lord's Supper is to be observed in the context of the church assembly on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) and is also an opportunity to be reminded of the fact we *share* in the blessings extended through the body and blood of Jesus Christ ("communion," 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

3) To learn God's word. God wants His people to grow in their knowledge of Him and His will (2 Peter 3:18), eagerly desiring it as a newborn baby desires its mother's milk (1 Peter 2:2-3). In fact, God is displeased whenever His people do not grow in their knowledge of His will (Hebrews 5:12-14). The only way for this maturity in knowledge to happen is for Christians to diligently study God's word (like the Bereans in Acts 17:10-12). Certainly, such a commitment to learning God's word should be made personal to the point that each disciple of Christ is putting forth the effort to study God's word privately. However, God also makes it clear that He wants Christians spending time with other Christians so as to learn His word from each other (Acts 2:42; 11:23-26; 18:11; 19:9-10). God has clearly designed the assemblies of the church to aid in teaching His word to the entire congregation (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians

14:26-31, note that miraculous gifts were used in the New Testament times to teach and confirm God's word prior to the completion of the New Testament; Colossians 4:16; 1 Timothy 4:13). Even singing is designed, in part, to accomplish this goal (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

4) To encourage and be encouraged. God has designed the local church to be a base of fellowship and support that is greater than the individual. For example, there are many "one another" responsibilities God has given to Christians that are best accomplished in the context of a local church (i.e. pray for one another, be hospitable toward one another, carry one another's burdens, correct one another, greet one another, love one another, etc.). And, while many of these things can and should take place outside the assemblies of the church, everything about the assemblies must be done for building those assembled up in the faith (1 Corinthians 14:26). We must consider one another in the assemblies and try to stimulate each other to greater love and good works and encourage each other to live faithfully for Christ (Hebrews 10:23-25). Even our singing teaches and admonishes (warns) one another to live for God (Colossians 3:16). As we assemble and do what God instructs (singing, praying, learning God's word, taking the Lord's Supper, and giving to support God's work), we should be encouraged to share in these things with other Christians rather than doing such alone!

God has designed the local church to regularly assemble. In order for this to happen, though, the members of the church must make the assemblies a priority and not neglect them. If you are not being diligent to assemble with the church, you should recognize the sin and damage involved in this and commit to obeying God. Then, if you are being diligent in this way, you should renew your commitment to this important part of God's design.

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What are some key lessons learned from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correction: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this teaching to be trained in righteousness and equipped for every good work?