

Why Go to Church?

Psalm 122:1

My church going began when I was about five years old. My father and mother began attending church and committed their lives to Jesus. Not long after that my father believed God wanted him to be a preacher. So for 68 years I've been going to church nearly every Sunday. Most of those years that meant Sunday School, two Sunday services and one Wednesday night service. In some churches I've pastored there were three Sunday services and in one there were four. Not counting mission conferences, evangelistic meeting, camps, retreats, college and seminary chapels two and a quarter years of my life have been in church attendance. I suppose you could call it a "Life Style."

From time-to-time I have asked people "Why do you go to church?" Some of you responded to that poll. The answers I've received are;

To worship God. That's the best answer.

That answer is interesting in that people who live

To hear preaching...I need to give that person \$5.00.

To have fellowship

To receive direction.

Nicholas wrote "To get recharged spiritually for the next week."

A seeker said, "I go to learn what Christianity is about."

Another said, "I like it!"

Mittie (an eighty year old) wrote that she has always been in church and misses it when she's not there on Sunday.

Sasha's reason was to serve God and help others know Christ.

A poet wrote:

Some go to church to take a walk,

Some go to church to laugh and talk-

Some go there to meet a friend:

Some go their time to spend.

Some go there a fault to cover

Some go there for speculation;

Some go there for observation.

Some go there to doze and nod

THE WISE GO THERE TO WORSHIP GOD.

I want to be clear that going to church is not a substitute for trusting Jesus as Savior. The fiery evangelist Billy Sunday said, “Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you a car.”

Whatever the reason Church attendance is popular. According to the statistical abstract of the United States, “On any given Sunday more people attend church than the combined yearly attendance for all professional baseball, basketball, and football games.” 1994, “Emerging Trends.”

I want to approach attendance from the perspective of the ancient pilgrimage of the Hebrew worshippers. There are 15 Psalms that describe their feelings. (They are the pilgrim songs, sometimes called the songs of degrees or Ascent Psalms. It’s important to understand they describe a place.

At one time that was the Tabernacle built by Moses...Deut. 16:16
 Later it was the temple built by Solomon. I Kings 8:20 and 9:2
 Jesus went to the temple and to the synagogues which were in each city. Luke 4:16 says it was his custom even though I know He recognized that some of the worship leaders were hypocrites and insincere.

In the first century that place was mostly in house churches. II Cor. 14:23

1. THE TRIP TO JERUSALEM WAS LIKE A VACATION

It gave relief—Psalm 120:6-7; Psalm 133:1

The world is so violent, disturbing, restless, and we are in desperate need of a quiet place. See the song: “There’s a Quiet Understanding. When we’re gathered in the Spirit”

Church should be a safe place. One of our youth wrote, “I go to church because it is a family I can rely on. Our church includes ethnic groups from all over the world, but here we are all Christians. There is no racial judgment here. At church we are all equal. I am part of a beautiful, multicultural family I cannot have anywhere else in the world.” I hope that is an accurate assessment. Some churches are masochistic. In my early ministry I probably beat up on people. One man said to me as he shook hands with me at the front door, “Well you really skinned me this morning, but I’ll be back to night and you can have the inch of skin that’s left.”

The song “There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place” is my prayer for our church life.

II. LIKE ALL VACATIONS THERE IS A COST.

Those travelers had to get goat setters, they lost time in tilling their land. Deut. 16:15, “no man should appear before the Lord empty handed.” As poor as Joseph and Mary were they brought an offering of two birds. Luke 2:24

Make no mistake there will be hazards or hindrances to regular church attendance. Psalm 121: 1-8

III. ANTICIPATE AND MEDITATE ON THE GOOD THINGS THAT HAPPEN IN TIMES OF WORSHIP.

Find appropriate verses.

Don’t take for granted the opportunity of attending church.

Psalm 84:1-3 and verse 10; Psalm 137:1-4 and Psalm 126:1-2

Conclusion: Let us do a little survey. I hope you can remember the day when you came to saving faith. When you acknowledged Jesus as your Savior. Do we have any who remember if it happened on Monday when I prayed and accepted Jesus as my Savior. Would you hold up your hand? Tuesday? Wednesday? Thursday? Friday? Saturday? How about Sunday? (I have conducted this little survey several times in churches and Sunday always receives a visual majority.)

Why not tackle regular church attendance on a trial basis? “If you don’t like what you hear on any given Sunday, your sins will be cheerfully refunded.”