

Church Member! Fight to Attend Your Church Weekly!

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Fight? Attend Church? Weekly? Church member? Yes, indeed! We live in such a swirlingly busy age with countless distractions and endless entertainments and overly-busy schedules. How easily and how quickly it can be that the gathering together with the people of God in your local assembly can be missed one week because of a scheduling conflict. And then it becomes easier the next week. And the next. And so on. So the title is intentional and the motive of this essay is pastorally & compassionately exhortational: *FIGHT* and make it a priority to attend your local church on a weekly basis.

I understand things come up. Illness happens. Vacations occur. There are providential workings of God that may cause a child of God to miss church. But please hear this: missing church should not be the *norm*; it should be the *exception*. It is your *local church* where Christ promises to walk amidst His people and bless them by speaking to them and ministering to them in very real and special ways.

Additionally, this essay is for the *true Christian*. This is not just another paper urging the unsaved to just 'get to church'. This essay is for those whom God has saved and who have obediently committed themselves to a local church and submitted themselves to the leadership of that church. This is an essay for the saved to reorient the focus on the Lord and on His church because this in our culture can distract and disrupt and cloud our minds at times.

My argument? Fight with all your might to attend your church weekly. I'll provide 7 simple reminders.

1. For the sake of your HEART.

Dear Christian, bought with the precious blood of Christ, as a newborn baby long for the pure milk of the Word so that you may grow in respect to salvation (1 Peter 2:1-2). O child of God, have you tasted the kindness of the Lord? Have you partaken of the sweetnesses of His love for you? Do you hunger for Him and thirst for righteousness? Attend church for the sake of your heart so that you can grow as you receive the food of the Word. No matter what you tell yourself and how you seek to justify it, it's impossible for you to grow spiritually if you continually find yourself absent from the body of Christ. For the sake of your heart, attend your church to be fed God's Word through the preaching and to hear Christ address you and the Spirit to mold your heart through the truths heralded.

2. For the sake of your CONGREGATION.

Dear Christian, Christ never called you to a life of lone-ranger isolationism. Christianity is never *my Christianity*. It's always a community, joint, shared journey. And that journey is with other predestined travelers who are progressing and traveling to glory just as you are. Don't neglect them! No matter what you tell yourself, private times in the Word (as important as that is!), and family worship (as important as that is!), and listening to sermons online (as helpful as that can be!) is not a substitute for actually going to the gathering with your fellow believers to worship the crucified & risen & interceding Christ *together*. Your fellow believers who have covenanted together *love you*. When you're not there, they wonder where you are (at least, they **should**). They care for you and wonder if everything's OK. We minister together as a *body*. A body has many members. When one member is absent, there's something *incomplete* about the body. So make it a point, a deliberate point, to attend worship *with your congregation*.

3. For the sake of your LEADERSHIP.

You, dear Christian, submitted yourself obediently to Christ and willfully from your heart to membership in your local church (if you haven't done so yet, you should). They are called by God to give watchcare over your soul. As a father cares for his children, so a leader loves and gives oversight to Christ's people. As a husband leads his wife and protects her, so undershepherds are to care for Christ's Bride by giving biblical leadership to her. As a shepherd leads and guides the sheep, so your pastor-elders must give biblical guidance and counsel to the sheep bought with the blood of Christ. Your leadership cares for you. They watch over you. They are to minister to you. One of the **primary** ways your pastors care for you is by praying regularly for you and preaching God's Word faithfully to you. If you miss church, you're neglecting one of God's chiefest ways for your pastors to care for your soul -- through the feeding of God's Word. If a child didn't come to meals, wouldn't a loving parent wonder what's going on and whether the child is sick? So you, dear Christian, receive the feeding and nurturing and loving and guidance from Christ as His appointed undershepherds tenderly love your soul by praying, studying, and preaching. You should attend & receive.

4. For the sake of your TEMPTABILITY.

Dear Christian, still growing in godliness, fight sin and temptation with zeal. Have you forgotten you have a cunning enemy who would love to distract you and put obstacles (enticing and entertaining ones!) so that you don't attend church? Don't isolate yourself! If you miss one or two or three weeks, how easy it is (and Satan loves to underscore this in your mind) to miss just **another** week. After all, no one has called and (you may think) no one notices or cares. But how temptable we are -- even as children of God. We are not to abandon the gathering with the saints and we're not to let worldly endeavors take precedence over, or priority over, the Word of God. To help guard you from temptation and to help keep you alert to your sinfulness, sin's attractiveness, Christ's beauty, and heaven's nearness, fight to attend corporate worship as a safeguard and as a blessing to fortify your soul in grace & in the gospel weekly.

5. For the sake of your WITNESS.

Dear Christian, one way you can represent Christ to the lost is by prioritizing your church attendance. *This* is your new family -- your eternal one that is wed far stronger than just biological ties. You have a family of blood-bought Christians that you've joined yourself to. So, it's OK (I would argue, it's **good** and **right**) to deny attending a party or a dinner or an entertainment activity if it conflicts with your corporate worship. Priorities are good. Have them. Hold them. Stick to them. Let the lost see that you prioritize Christ and His Word. If you don't prioritize meeting with Christ and the people of Christ and hearing the Word preached, *why would you think the lost would do that as they watch your mediocre attitude toward it?* For the sake of your witness, fight hard to prioritize corporate worship.

6. For the sake of your CONSCIENCE.

As a believer, you obediently submitted yourself to undershepherds to love and nurture and care for you. You joined yourself to a church and there was some sort of commitment or covenant that you signed. In that, undoubtedly you affirmed that you'll attend church regularly. Do you have a clean conscience before your Savior that you've been true to your commitment? Additionally, your Savior loves you and calls you to attend and not forsake the assembling together with the saints. Never forget, going to church is *commanded* for the people of God. It's never a burden but a blessing. Never a weighty duty but a delightful yearning. Prioritize the gathering with the people because Christ calls you to it and also because you committed yourself to it in your own membership agreement.

7. For the sake of your SAVIOR.

Dear elect child of God whom the Father sent His Son to redeem, Christ is present among His lampstands and He walks amidst His churches. Christ gathers to meet with you in corporate worship, will you skip it and refuse to meet with Him? O how He yearns to fellowship with you and address you from His Word. Will you find other things more important, more pressing, more entertaining, more worthwhile than meeting with your Beloved? In corporate worship, Christ speaks to you in a very real and powerful and special way through the preaching of the Word. If you

miss corporate worship consistently, you miss the ordinances (baptism and Lord's Supper) which are two commanded means of grace for you to remember Him and His substitutionary death *with the people of God*. Do you miss this? Do other things take priority over this? O your Savior yearns for you and loves to meet with you and anticipates meeting with you? So should you, O Christian, attend the sweet times of fellowship where you remember the gospel, feast upon Christ, receive conviction by the Spirit, and edification from God's people. Prioritize it!