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LET US GO TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD



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"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" Psalm 122:1

It seems that there is a new trend in the world, especially in the west, of infrequent attendance to church meetings. Although it is understood that believer can be busy with personal responsibilities on the job or with the family, it seems that church attendance comes last on the list of possibilities, while the number of weekly church activities and the amount of time spent for the Lord is lessened so that believers can have more time for themselves and their own needs.

In western mega-churches it is rare to find a large number of believers who attend services or activities throughout the work-week, and even lesser in the event of a congregational prayer meeting. Churches cater to modern trends of preaching sermons

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that contain very little from God's Word; actually in some churches more time is spent on announcements than on preaching. Entertainment and events are scheduled to attract people while the church is seized in a cycle of performing programs in order to draw in both the unsaved and the wandering believers.

Without shame believers sacrifice their attendance because of other weekly activities and, what I believe to be a lust for money. They use excuses such as: "I am sick", "I am tired", "I don't feel a part of the church", and so on. It's interesting that they are not too sick or tired to go to work, but when it's time to go to church they are simply too weak to go. When they do come their faces show little joy or anticipation; they don't have that child-like anticipation and attendance becomes a difficult responsibility they simply need to fulfill; church is an activity to go along with but with little or no thought for God's word or preparation of the heart. Often their thoughts are on the fellowship time after church.

★ **It is not strange that more believers are falling away from Christ; they fall deeper into anxiety, fear, and depression and are no longer effective for the kingdom of God – because they neglect what is important for the health of the Christian life; regular attendance to church.**

It is not strange that more believers are falling away from Christ; they fall deeper into anxiety, fear, and depression and are no longer effective for the kingdom of God – because they neglect what is important for the health of the Christian life; regular attendance to church. Charles Finney, in relation to church attendance, habitually said that the church would never see revival if all did not attend church meetings. Today this would be considered extreme in many churches, but think of the joy pastors would have to see one-hundred percent of their congregation show up not only on Sunday but during mid-week meetings as well! I believe that this kind of willful participation would bring excitement and faith among believers – but we will witness this only when we see revival awaken the sleeping churches.

► **1. IF BELIEVERS WANT TO WITHSTAND THE PRESSURES OF THE LAST DAYS, HANG ON TO THEIR FAITH AND JOY IN THE LORD AND BE EFFECTIVE FOR GOD'S KINGDOM, IT IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY TO REGULARLY COME TO THE HOUSE OF GOD.**

The writer of Hebrews warned believers of the rapid return of our Lord Jesus Christ when he warned us not to forsake assembling together in the last days, but to stir up love and good works, which include regularly attending church: *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* **Hebrews 10:25**

In these last days, when the spirit of the anti-Christ is growing stronger, we are forsaking the assembly, and because of that

we are withdrawing from the encouragement and help others may bring. How many times has a believer failed or fallen away because during the hard times they pulled away from other believers? The closer we are to Jesus' second coming, the more spiritual warfare and persecution we will face. The best "medicine" and support is the assembling together of the saints. It is easy to come to church when life is uncomplicated, but when the hard times hit the first thing we do is skip church; we begin fighting in our own strength which pulls us away from those around us, which is the biggest trick of the enemy. Actually, in these times we need to do everything in our power to surround ourselves with God's people.

When Solomon prayed for the purpose of God's temple, we can clearly see that the temple was the place to which believers could come in prayer when they were oppressed by their enemies or experiencing trouble: *"Or if Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and return and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers."* **2 Chronicles 6:24-25**

When they experienced great difficulty God's purpose was not for them to pull away from the temple but rather to come to the temple and pray. Today, when you call people who have been absent for a while, they often answer that they are sick or are having problems. What is interesting is that in times difficulty they put God's house last on their list. They pull into themselves and fellowship with the only friend they can find in their isolation – the devil.

When we face trials the worst thing we can do is to pull away from believers because the only place we can find true encouragement, and the support of brothers and sisters, is in the place where our faith will grow while hearing the testimonies from God's Word.

The Word tells us that: *"So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* **Romans 10:17** What better place for the Word to be preached than in God's house! In hard times our faith cannot grow if we forsake the assembly of the saints. Often believers fall and lose their faith because they pulled away from the place of God's Word. Moreover, the devil arranges circumstances so that they attempt to solve their own problems alone, by busying themselves with work or other activities thinking that in this their problems will cease. Having coffee with friends at a "gossip party", getting involved in a sports team with brothers and sisters from church or going on a church outing cannot replace going to God's house. The clichés "I don't go to church, I meet with God by myself" are clichés that lead us to failure.

In the early church we can see that the believers had set days when they would

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go to God's house. We are reminded of the prophetess Anna who after 7 years of marriage consecrated herself to God until she was 84 years of age: "Who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." **Luke 2:37** or perhaps the disciples of the early church who met at the temple daily: "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." **Acts 2:46** Peter and John had the custom of going: "Up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour." **Acts 3:1**

We read in Luke's gospel that Jesus had a custom of going to the Synagogue: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" **Luke 4:16**, as well as other days so he could be involved in ministry. When he ascended to heaven the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy: "and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." **Luke 24:53**

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been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem! Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together." Psalm 122:1-3 The church is to believers what Jerusalem was to the Israelites – a place of joy, refreshment, God's strength and the fellowship of believers; a place where comfort and encouragement could be found. Our feet should always be ready to willfully and joyfully come to God's house, especially in these last days.

► **2. IN GOD'S HOUSE BELIEVERS WORSHIP GOD, HEAR HIS WORD, AND ACCEPT COUNSEL FROM HIS SERVANT.**

Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, to the Testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the LORD. For thrones are set there for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. **Psalm 122:4-5**

Today people have a tendency to forsake church attendance; they run to all kind of seminars, Christian institutions, private home groups, and other variety of para-church activities where they are prophesied over being told that their church is problematic and that they should leave because God has something greater for them. (It is interesting that these kind of prophesies always reveal that God has something "great" for someone, not something small.) Some of these activities may have value, but they cannot replace going to God's house.

God's house is a place of congregational worship! God's people are a people of praise and worship. The Old and New Testaments are filled with examples of powerful congregational praise and worship to the Lord. When times are hard and we feel pressure from every side we need to assemble with the

saints and worship Jesus together with them. The Psalmist says: *"Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations on earth. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You."* **Psalm 67:4-5**

The Word is filled with examples of collective victory; the people gained the victory when they worshipped and exalted God regardless of the problems and pressures all about. We remember Jehoshaphat's victory over Moab and Ammon; as they placed their confidence in the Lord and lifted up praise to the Him to won the victory. The Word records, *"And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: 'Praise the LORD, For His mercy endures forever.' Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated."* **2 Chronicles 20:21-22**

In Acts we read that when the church collectively thanked God they gained favor and they grew in number: *"...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."* **Acts 2:47**

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In Old Testament times, the elders of the city sat by the doors listening to people and

their problems; they would judge occasional conflicts and situations among the people, such as when Boaz gathered ten elders of the city in order to judge and be witnesses to the conversation between him and Ruth, for whom he had custody, and bless his marriage with her. *And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.* **Ruth 4:2**

Sometimes even the king would sit next to the door to speak with the people and make various decisions: *"Then the king arose and sat in the gate. And they told all the people, saying, 'There is the king, sitting in the gate.' So all the people came before the king."* **2 Samuel 19:8** Sermons and prophesies were given at the doors as in the days of Nehemiah and Jeremiah: *"Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel."* **Nehemiah 8:1** *"Thus the LORD said to me: 'Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; and say to them, "Hear the word of the LORD, you kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates."'"* **Jeremiah 17:19-20**

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But in the New Testament we see that among the churches there was a place in which believers received the Word and counsel from their pastors and leaders: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:42* We remember Peter’s speech on the Day of Pentecost and the first converts in the book of Acts and the life of the first church. The church was the place where believers received the Word. Peter and John had a custom of going to the temple every day for prayer at 3 o’clock in the afternoon (**Acts 3:1**) They were in the habit of getting up each day to go to God’s house; and when they went and gathered there God did His work. When they were persecuted and when it was forbidden them to preach they prayed together in a specific place. The Word says: *“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31* When Paul was on a missionary journey we read: *“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.” Acts 16:4* The Writer of Hebrews says: *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17* James says that if one is sick he ought to call the elders and let them pray over him. Church elders are not your neighbors or some other preacher or a friend from another organization, rather they are those found in your church – in a designated place of congregational gathering.

Therefore, the church is a place of congregational gathering, worship, and receiving the Word of God. This new generation flees from every proper habit, stability, boundary, and respect for authority under the veil of false spirituality and mystical Christianity, which is void of any kind of restrictions, stipulations, routines or obedience. These sheep without a shepherd graze by themselves by going to internet websites and seminars and by meeting with spiritual friends with suspicious motives; very often they end up with their life in ruins. Rather than coming to church to worship God and hear the Word they have their own private home group because they don’t want to come in line with God’s will and come to the place where God’s people gather.

It is very important to come to church meetings, it’s a biblical principle. God establishes the place where believers can come together and worship Him, hear the Word and receive leadership and counsel from His servants. This is why we should flee from the place where our leaders are not present; flee from invitations to functions where the church is not present, where our leaders are not present for in these circumstances people will try to pull you away from church functions. You can know that something is not right with them regardless of how spiritual they appear.

► **3. IN GOD’S HOUSE BELIEVERS WORK FOR THE GENERAL GOOD, KEEPING THE PEACE AND ENCOURAGING THE PROGRESS OF OTHER BELIEVERS AND THE CHURCH.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces.’ For the

sake of my brethren and companions, I will now say, 'Peace be within you.' Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.

Psalm 122:6-9

God's house should be a house of prayer, not for selfish prayers of peace and blessing, but prayers for others. When we come to church, to a gathering of God's people; we do not come for the primary reason of fulfilling our own desires. It should be a priority to care for the good of other people and the general church.

Personally I believe that in order to accomplish all that is in our power to do, the place where we gather must become the place of comfort, and the greatest of all, peace among the believers. *"Peace be within your walls, Prosperity within your palaces."*

Psalm 122:7

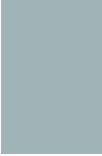
Some believers simply cannot be helped. Often in place of praying for others, caring for the wellbeing of the church and maintaining peace they spread their dissatisfaction, rebellion and negativity. Often this is because of immaturity and a disorderly life. Sometimes it is because they do not wish to submit their will to God's ways or to the truth they hear in church. As a result of their restlessness, thinking only of themselves, they spread around the church the agitation they feel.

The Word tells us that, for the sake of our brothers and sisters, we ought to declare: *"Peace to you"* and not constantly fight and destroy Christ's body with gossiping and various devised stories which are mostly not true. For the sake of God we must pray for good and not enjoy watching others fail (some

simply cannot endure the success of others): *"Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good."* **Psalm 122:9**

Many, unfortunately, are not interested in the advancement of the kingdom, they care only for their advancement. When they succeed or when they feel a touch from the Lord they go on and forget him. They buy frivolous toys for themselves while not caring for the obvious needs of the church. Our attitude must be to do all we can to ensure that the church and God's Kingdom goes forward in every way. We need to be like David who said: *"Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver... Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house...'* *Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the LORD..."* **1 Chronicles 29:2, 3, 9** Let us remember the early church. *"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need."* **Acts 2:45** The early church was a church that cared for others and the advancement of God's Kingdom.

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What are the relationships like in your church? The Psalmist beseeches us to do all we can to keep peace in the walls of Jerusalem. It is just as important to keep peace in the church. How hard it is to hear about church divisions. Are we peacemakers in our cities and local churches or are we instruments in the hand of the enemy? Jesus said *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”* **Matthew 5:9**

We ought to do all in our power to bring peace. The Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians: *“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”* **2 Corinthians 13:11** and to the Ephesians he said *“endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* **Ephesians 4:3**

The only way to keep the peace in the church is to submit to God and minimize our own wishes and needs. It is time for believers to begin to live in peace. You can help your pastor lead according to God’s works by not

hindering him with constant complaining, gossiping, and old wives’ tales– *“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:12-14

It is time to grow up and become mature, to put away from ourselves dissatisfaction and a selfish spirit, which constantly criticizes and brings chaos. The time has come to become peacemakers in His body, this is God’s heart. Those who destroy God’s house – the church – God will destroy! How can we be a testimony to the unsaved when disunity and destruction can be seen among us? For this reason we must pray for the peace of others and the good of His church.

“Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.” **Psalm 122:9**



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