

Is Weekly Church Attendance Required by God?



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Restoration Movement Literature

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modification.

This preacher hears the following often, or some form of it:

“I don’t feel like I have to be in a church building to serve or obey God.”

This DEFINITELY has to be general attitude of our country, because upwards of 80% of believe in “God” (in some sense), and over 70% claim to believe specifically in “the Christian God”, yet only about 30% of our country attends church weekly.

Another common thought that is expressed is,

“My child has ball practice/game or another obligation...”

This also DEFINITELY is the general attitude of our culture today, as now ball games/practices are routinely scheduled on Wednesday nights, Sundays, and sometimes even Sunday mornings!

So what does Scripture say?

It is important to break down these lines of thinking

Scripturally, so we are not biased in our conclusions. Let us begin Scripturally looking at culture’s attitudes towards church with “I don’t feel like I...” from the first quote above.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB) says:

““The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

Whenever anyone begins with, “I feel like” or “I don’t feel like”, or something else where the appeal to understanding is one’s own emotions, this is already a severely flawed approach. How many of us “feel” about anything is irrelevant to whether it is true. The only thing that matters is what is true.

For example, how does any person feel about cancer? It is universally hated, as it should be. Yet, our feelings about cancer do not change its existence, or halt its rapid, destructive path in a person's body who has cancer. If we "felt" a certain way about cancer, it does not change the inherent truth about it. That is true with all of life, whether or not we like it, or feel a certain way about it.

So how can we possibly interpret God's Word differently? There are naturally going to parts we like (salvation, eternal life, peace, joy, community, etc.) and parts we do not like (i.e. some of our responsibilities as prescribed by God – discipleship is costly – Luke 14:27). Christ experienced the same thing! There were parts of His mission He entirely enjoyed (His friends, teaching, healing) and parts that were awful (persecution, being falsely accused, whipped, beaten, crucified). This is life, and the Christian life, for that matter.

Now it is truly terrible that this kind of thinking has even come on the church. There are MANY churches that are truly lifeless, boring, mission-less, non-effective, and therefore dying and honestly unworthy of the title "church". So we must be honest in saying that some do not come to church because *truly* their experience was miserable, or at the very least boring and/or pointless.

However, a lifeless church is not specifically what is being addressed here. Instead, there are many *good* churches (there are no perfect churches, just like there are no perfect people, like you and me ☺) who are doing good, worshipping God, saving souls, helping others, and helping each other. These churches are not perfect, as stated above, but are Scripturally-worthy of attendance, participation, and support. Yet, even these churches, and the Christians who attend them are still

commonly posited with the flawed statement: “I don’t feel like I should have to attend church.”

This is what is being addressed here: flawed thinking, and potentially a poor attitude, about the things ***God has commanded***. It is Scriptural that a person who calls themselves a Christian, or as Jesus puts it – those who call Him “Lord” – must do what He says. Even Jesus asks those who call Him Lord but ignore His commands this question in Luke 6:46 (NASB) –

“⁴⁶ “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Let this be a sincerely-kind warning to those who do not think that attendance, participation, and support of a New Testament church is not their obligation – Jesus disagrees.

Let us look at the second part of the first quote above: “...have to be in a church building...”

If a person who calls themselves a Christian views coming to church as nothing more than being in a physical location, there is another genuine Scriptural problem to be addressed:

- 1) Scripture NEVER refers to “church” as coming to a building. The word “church” itself means “assembly” – otherwise – coming to, or being a part of a church – means being in the assembly. There is no other possible definition. Church buildings are not necessary to Christian worship but simply useful tools as churches grow to a size where they can no longer meet “house to house” (Acts 2:46). If your local church does not meet in a building, what shall we then do - meet at your house? 😊

- 2) Acts 2:42 among other places tells us what we as Christians DO in church (it is MUCH more than just to “be” in a building) – we learn God’s Word, encourage one another, pray together for one another’s needs, and commune with Christ in the Lord’s Supper. Shall we tell God these things which He has prescribed as part of His weekly worship are not in tune with “our feelings” on the matter and thus are unimportant? How will the Almighty Judge of Heaven and Earth handle that kind of an attitude on Judgment Day?
- 3) Commonly this kind of thinking follows with, “I want to be part of a community that does not require me to attend as long as I communicate...” This is answered similarly to the above: how does “I want” fall into God’s will as prescribed in Scripture? How does “communicate” replace “assemble” in God’s mind? Where do we honestly get off telling God what we are willing to do, but still want all of His benefits? Again, how will that go for us? (Or, better yet – how IS that going for us? 😊)

Now let us handle the last part of the first thought that has been dissected above:

“...to serve or obey God.”

How does a person know what God wants? Our feelings? Visions? Dreams? Hallucinations? (This would be about as accurate and helpful as any of the above)

God’s Word tells us DIRECTLY how we know what God wants:

“¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word ^[a]of Christ.”
(Romans 10:17 – NASB)

So faith does NOT come from our feelings, or traditions, or opinions, or anyone else's opinions – it comes from God's Word!

God's Word speaks of attending church weekly in many places, such as Hebrews 10:25 (NASB):

“²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Notice that some, even in the 1st century church, were already missing the weekly church services. What does the author of Hebrews tell them? *Don't miss church!* There is even an admonition to do so “all the more” – definitely not less! Yet, the Day is approaching, and what are many of those who call themselves Christians doing? Attending church less, or not at all!

There is also a critical element to church in the above verse that people often miss – “encouraging one another...” If a person comes to church with the end goal to get something out of the preached Word, commune with Christ, and encourage others, that goal will likely be accomplished, because that is precisely what church is designed to do! However, if a person attends church merely out of a sense of duty, or thinking that God just wants them “in a building” once a week for the sake of being in a building, they will be undeniably disappointed!

If a person does not try to get something out of the preached Word, it is like being served dinner, but never picking up the fork to eat it! If a person does not examine himself before communion, how does he expect to receive the spiritual nourishment from it? This would be like having a cold glass of water and a dry tongue but never lifting the glass

to your mouth! As well, if one does not come to encourage, how can a person expect to be encouraged? What nonsense really!

Now let us Scripturally address the second thought, bit by bit:

“My child has...”

“Children’s activities have become culture’s latest idol.” – Nick Grim

This author could not agree more. Besides, where in God’s Word is there an “excused absence” section for missing church or keeping your children from the eternal things of His Word?

As well, Christians have simply “laid down” and become a doormat to culture on this issue: Sundays (especially in the mornings, and even Wednesday nights) used to be respected times when other activities were purposefully not planned so people could go to church unimpeded. Then, as the last generation gradually became unchurched, and have raised unchurched kids, now there are no “sacred days or times.” There is no holy ground. There is no respect for God or His people, and many who call themselves “Christians” simply have followed culture into this mentality – that their child’s games are greater than God’s command to be in His weekly worship.

Again, it is useful to quote Jesus on this subject from Luke 6:46 (NASB):

“⁴⁶ “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Let us now examine the second part:

“...a ball practice/game or another obligation...”

When did *children's games* get to the point in our minds of being all-important, absolutely-necessary part of our lives, and our children's lives? Better yet, *how can this be defended Scripturally?*

It cannot be. When anything – anything at all – usurps God's commands, be it becomes an idol that we worship over God, *which is very dangerous.*

It is Scriptural that if we have other things in our lives that do not impede in our walk with Christ (otherwise, do ***not*** impede obeying Him as told by Scripture), that those things are issues of freedom (Romans 14; Galatians 5). Yet, when those same things ***do impede*** our ability to obey Christ, including our ability attend and participate in church, then they are sin! (Hebrews 12:1-3) We are told in the aforementioned Scripture that we are to “throw off” all those things that may “encumber us” in running the race towards the prize that is in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, if a children's activity impedes the race towards the eternal prize in Christ, then it needs to be thrown off! If enough genuine Christians pressed this matter, this would not be an issue, as it was not in previous generations!

Finally, let us examine more of what Jesus says about obeying God's Word:

“¹⁵ “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15, NASB)

“⁶ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not^[a] obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36, NASB, emphasis mine)

“⁴We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.” (John 9:4, NASB)

There are, of course, many other passages, but the point is clear: we must obey Christ – He is the Head of His Church (Colossians 1:18) – He expects us to assemble together weekly to commune with Him (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). We are to follow after the pattern of the early church (Philippians 3:17) to meet together weekly (Acts 20:7). We are to hear from God’s Word weekly (Acts 2:42; Romans 10:17). We are to encourage one another, **not** forsaking the assembly (Hebrews 10:25).

All of these things can only be done one way – His Way – meeting together weekly as He has prescribed, worshipping the way He has prescribed – learning from the Word, communing with Him, encouraging one another, and praying for each other. (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25)

Let us obey our Lord together and receive the victor’s crown!
(Revelation 2:10)