

November 29, 2015

## “Come Back to Church”

### Hebrews 10:22-25

Longer passages are not quoted in the study sheet, but they can be read in the accompanying transcript.

The Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own \_\_\_\_\_ because He loves people. But many today think church is \_\_\_\_\_. Join us In Search of the Lord’s Way to find out what \_\_\_\_\_ says about worshipping with the church.

The Pew Forum researchers say 55 million adults in America identify themselves as having \_\_\_\_\_ affiliation with religion. There are nearly 100 million Americans who are “unchurched,” that is, they haven’t \_\_\_\_\_ to church in quite a while. Even though they’re not going now, most of the unchurched \_\_\_\_\_ to go to church. Many folks feel that you can be a \_\_\_\_\_ Christian and not attend any congregation. The Bible, however, places a high priority on \_\_\_\_\_ membership in church.

In Psalm 122 David sang, “I was \_\_\_\_\_ when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” David and others would sing this song as they were walking up to Jerusalem to the \_\_\_\_\_ to observe the feast. It was a psalm of ascent. Many people would \_\_\_\_\_ for days to worship God. They had no car or chariot, but they \_\_\_\_\_ to be in the temple in the presence of God.

When brothers and sisters in Christ meet together for worship, they are meeting with God and with Christ. The church belongs to them; it’s their family. Of course, the Lord wants to meet with every member of his family regularly. He loves each of you. When you stop going to church, the Lord and His people miss you. We’re here to encourage you to live the Lord’s way.

**Our scripture reading today comes from The Letter to the Hebrews 10:22-25.** That’s a great encouragement from Scripture to attend worship \_\_\_\_\_ at church. Recent studies say that large numbers of young adults have \_\_\_\_\_ attending church. Some find church \_\_\_\_\_ or irrelevant. Some say the church is \_\_\_\_\_ of hypocrites or is so judgmental. Some don’t feel as connected as they would like, and others say that they’re just too \_\_\_\_\_ to go to church. Life can certainly become difficult, but attending and participating in church offers an amazing opportunity to find spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ and help with the most difficult tasks of life. I want to \_\_\_\_\_ to some of the objections that people give for not going to church.

First, *there are hypocrites at church.* A hypocrite is someone who \_\_\_\_\_ to be something he doesn’t intend to be. Yes, there are some pretenders at church, but most people come to church because they genuinely \_\_\_\_\_ God and want to \_\_\_\_\_ good lives. Everyone is \_\_\_\_\_, and everyone \_\_\_\_\_, but that doesn’t mean that they’re pretenders or actors. It means that they’re \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus told the apostles at the Garden of Gethsemane, “the spirit is indeed willing but the \_\_\_\_\_ is weak” (Matthew 26:41), and that’s still true of people today.

Before we start \_\_\_\_\_ fingers at others, perhaps we should look at our \_\_\_\_\_ lives. Do you really want to let someone else’s bad behavior \_\_\_\_\_ you from God? It seems much wiser to let

God \_\_\_\_\_ with the hypocrites and to make \_\_\_\_\_ that we remain right with God. The Lord Jesus had to deal with hypocritical Pharisees during His entire \_\_\_\_\_, but He never let their hypocrisy keep Him from doing what was right! He kept right on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the synagogues and loving people. Don't let someone else's \_\_\_\_\_ infect your heart and turn you away from God.

Second, some say *church is \_\_\_\_\_ or it's irrelevant*. When people use the word "boring," they're really describing their perspective or \_\_\_\_\_. Any activity can be boring or exciting \_\_\_\_\_ on the attitude of the person speaking. People usually get \_\_\_\_\_ of a worship service what they \_\_\_\_\_ into it. Give me the Word of God to \_\_\_\_\_ my soul.

David describes the "law of the Lord" in Psalm 19:10 as, "More to be desired are they than \_\_\_\_\_, even much fine gold; sweeter also than \_\_\_\_\_ and drippings of the honeycomb." This inspired psalmist was speaking about the Law of the Old Testament, which can be found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He found them desirable, valuable, and sweeter than honey. He found them so because they were \_\_\_\_\_ to him.

The Word of God is also meaningful, and it can be meaningful to you. It will \_\_\_\_\_ you where you came from, why you're here, and where you're going after this life is over. The Bible has the words of \_\_\_\_\_ life (John 12:50) and it has the truth that sets people \_\_\_\_\_ (John 8:32). The gospel is a message of grace and hope, peace and love; it's \_\_\_\_\_. It will \_\_\_\_\_ you how to live victoriously in this life and how to \_\_\_\_\_ God on the Day of Judgment with confidence. The Bible is God's message of \_\_\_\_\_ and a message of \_\_\_\_\_. It will teach you how to \_\_\_\_\_ the pitfalls of life and it will give you purpose and direction. As the Divine book, the Bible will \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord's will for your life. A sincere study of God's Word can never be boring to one who wants to \_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_ God.

Third, *some people say that people at church are judgmental*. It may \_\_\_\_\_ that way. Actually, people \_\_\_\_\_ are "judgmental." Have you ever been to a ball game where an \_\_\_\_\_ made a controversial call? Everybody gets \_\_\_\_\_ about the call. Was he "in" or was he "out"? One group thinks the referee is \_\_\_\_\_, while the other group \_\_\_\_\_ him. Conservatives judge liberals, and liberals judge them right back. Everyone makes judgments. One of the greatest ironies of our time is the way people view judging. It goes like this: Well, I can judge you, but don't you judge me!

As for judging, the real \_\_\_\_\_ for making judgments about right and wrong is God's Holy Word. The Lord Jesus said, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment" (John 7:24). If God calls something sin, it is sin whether we \_\_\_\_\_ with God or not. God knows His will, and He only calls things sinful because they are \_\_\_\_\_ or hurtful. God said, through the prophet Isaiah, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

The people at church love others \_\_\_\_\_ to tell them the truth about sin. Sin will cause a person to lose his \_\_\_\_\_. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is \_\_\_\_\_." If I care about your soul, I'll talk about \_\_\_\_\_ and I'll also talk about \_\_\_\_\_. I don't say this to be \_\_\_\_\_, but because I know how dangerous sin is to your soul. If I didn't care about you I'd simply \_\_\_\_\_ the subject of sin and let you bear your consequences. I'd tell you sin is "no big deal"; or "there's nothing to

worry about!” To remain silent about sin or to lie about sin is \_\_\_\_\_ and it’s uncaring. Telling people the truth about sin is \_\_\_\_\_. Don’t be so quick to \_\_\_\_\_ your neighbor at church.

Fourth, people say, *Well, I’m so \_\_\_\_\_ I don’t have time for church.* When I hear this I find it’s usually an \_\_\_\_\_. Most people can determine their priorities and their schedules. If you’re too busy to \_\_\_\_\_ God to your schedule, just remember one day time will be no more, and you won’t have any more time. God will require your soul of you, and you’ll wish you could go back in time and \_\_\_\_\_ things.

The Lord Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ that people would be busy making a living and needing food and clothes and shelter. The Lord said, “But seek \_\_\_\_\_ His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Putting the Lord first means spending \_\_\_\_\_ with Him and His family, the church, in worship and in service. **Read James 4:13-17.** The right thing to do is to attend worship; to not attend could be \_\_\_\_\_.

Fifth, some people say, *Well, I don’t feel connected at church.* Some folks find it hard to make \_\_\_\_\_ at church the way they would like. The best way to \_\_\_\_\_ friends is to \_\_\_\_\_ a friend. Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man *that has* friends must show himself friendly.” That is, if you come to church late and you leave as soon as the final “amen” is said, you’ll probably \_\_\_\_\_ make many friends at church. Instead of \_\_\_\_\_ until everyone comes to you, reach out to other people. Get involved at church; get involved in some good work. Learn people’s names. Attend Bible classes. Volunteer.

People say they aren’t as \_\_\_\_\_ to God as they used to be. We ask the question, “Who \_\_\_\_\_?” Did God leave you or did you leave God? People can easily \_\_\_\_\_ away from God and the church. The Bible says, “we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*” (Hebrews 2:1). It’s easy to allow the \_\_\_\_\_ and its ways to cause our love for God and His church to grow weak. I hope that you haven’t done that.

Through the years, I’ve grown close to a number of people who came back to church after being \_\_\_\_\_ for a time. They were always so glad that they came back. From the time they left they felt \_\_\_\_\_ and distant from God. They were miserable and spiritually unfulfilled without Him and needed to \_\_\_\_\_ their way home.

When people return to church, *they find that they grow closer to God.* The Lord wishes all people “might grope for Him and find Him, though He’s not \_\_\_\_\_ from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:27-28). God is the Father of your spirit (Hebrews 12:9). He created you and has heard your \_\_\_\_\_ all your life. God gave His only Son, His only begotten Son, Jesus, for your sins because He \_\_\_\_\_ about you. He gave you the Bible so that you might know Him and love Him. Church will \_\_\_\_\_ you know Him even better.

When people return to church, they find that they \_\_\_\_\_ their personal understanding of what the Bible teaches. The Word of God is an \_\_\_\_\_ book filled with hope and truth. A lifetime is not enough to know everything the Bible teaches, but many people \_\_\_\_\_ their minds on everything but this great treasure of spiritual knowledge. The Bible says, “Be \_\_\_\_\_ to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word

of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). If you want to know God’s Word better, then \_\_\_\_\_ Bible classes and worship at church.

When people return to church, they find *help in the religious \_\_\_\_\_ of their children*. Raising children in our nearly pagan society is tough enough, and parents need all the \_\_\_\_\_ that they can get. The church provides an environment where people \_\_\_\_\_ to serve the Lord and to live righteous lives. Churches provide moral and spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ and make a lasting impact on young lives. Churches provide Bible classes, camps, retreats, and youth gatherings with opportunities to be around other Christian young people.

When people return to church, they *discover ways of handling \_\_\_\_\_ challenges*. The Bible says, “casting all your anxieties on him, because he \_\_\_\_\_ for you” (1 Peter 5:7). At church, you can \_\_\_\_\_ with brothers and sisters in Christ and \_\_\_\_\_ from the Bible how the faithful people of the Bible dealt with their problems in life. I’ve found people at church are “full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another” (Romans 15:14).

Christians everywhere \_\_\_\_\_ struggles, yes! They’ve found the \_\_\_\_\_ of God and are finding that they’re able to comfort others and \_\_\_\_\_ them through their struggles. **Read that the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.**

The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ to us all. **Read what the Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.** The church can keep you spiritually \_\_\_\_\_, able to resist all the temptations and pitfalls of life. You \_\_\_\_\_ the church. If you’ve wandered away, come home.

**Read Hebrews 10:24-25.** Church is where people \_\_\_\_\_ each other up spiritually. We all need that strength and encouragement that comes from being around the people of God.

Occasionally I hear of someone who’s had a \_\_\_\_\_ experience at church. Someone has offended them or overlooked them. They react to this disappointment by \_\_\_\_\_ the church. If someone wrongs you, rather than quitting the Lord or the church, why not try a different approach. The Lord said, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. And if he listens to you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15). This is the Lord’s way.

When you quit church for these reasons, you’re actually letting someone come \_\_\_\_\_ you and God. Or when you \_\_\_\_\_ Christ out of your life, you also are putting your \_\_\_\_\_ in jeopardy. Listen again to Hebrews 10:25 and include verse 26, “not forsaking our own assembling together, as the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” Don’t push the Savior out of your life. Who else will shed his blood to save you?

God wants to bless you. If you’re not yet a Christian, you can come to the Lord in faith and love by \_\_\_\_\_ of your sins, \_\_\_\_\_ the name of the Lord, and by being \_\_\_\_\_. In baptism the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ away your sins and He adds you to the church, His church. It could be that as a Christian you’ve become one of the unchurched. Come back to the Lord and don’t let anything keep you from the church. Don’t let anything make your heart grow hard. Come back and find the love of God.