

## Worship with the Church

The Lord Jesus purchased the church with His own blood, because He \_\_\_\_\_ people. But many today \_\_\_\_\_ church is unimportant. Let's find out what \_\_\_\_\_ says about worshipping with a church.

Pew Forum researchers say nearly 60 million adults in America identify themselves as having \_\_\_\_\_ affiliation with religion. In all there are nearly \_\_\_\_\_ million Americans who are "unchurched," that is, they haven't been 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 associate with 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 feast. It was a psalm of ascent. Many people would \_\_\_\_\_ for days to worship God. They had no car or chariot, but they wanted to be in the temple in the presence of God.

When brothers and sisters in Christ assemble for worship, they're also \_\_\_\_\_ with God and with Christ. The church belongs to the Lord; it's His \_\_\_\_\_. Of course, the Lord wants to meet with every member of his family regularly. He loves each of you. When you stop coming to church, the Lord and His people \_\_\_\_\_ you. We're here to encourage you to live the Lord's way.

### **Our reading today comes from Hebrews 10:22-25.**

Here, the Hebrew writer is encouraging us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

Recent studies say that large numbers of \_\_\_\_\_ adults have stopped attending church. Some find church \_\_\_\_\_ or irrelevant. Some say the church is full of hypocrites or filled with judgmental people. Some don't feel as \_\_\_\_\_ as they would like, and others say 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 strength and \_\_\_\_\_ with the most difficult tasks of life. I want to spend some time responding to some of the objections people give for not going to church.

First, they say there are hypocrites at church. A hypocrite is someone who \_\_\_\_\_ to be something that he doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ to be. Yes, there are some pretenders at church; but most people come to church because they \_\_\_\_\_ God and want to live good lives. Christians are sometimes weak; everyone \_\_\_\_\_; but that doesn't mean that they're pretenders or actors. It means they're \_\_\_\_\_. Jesus told the apostles at the garden of Gethsemane, "the spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 26:41); and that's still true of people today.

Think with me: before we start pointing fingers at others, perhaps we should look at our \_\_\_\_\_ lives. Do you really want to let someone else's behavior separate you from \_\_\_\_\_? It seems much \_\_\_\_\_ to let God deal with the hypocrites and to make sure that we remain right with God. The Lord Jesus had to \_\_\_\_\_ with hypocritical Pharisees during His entire ministry, but He never let their

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**Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.**

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hypocrisy keep Him from doing what was right! He kept right on teaching and preaching in the synagogues and loving people. Don't let someone else's \_\_\_\_\_ infect your heart and turn you away from God.

Second, church is boring or is irrelevant, some say. When people use the word "boring," they're describing their perspective or \_\_\_\_\_. Any activity can be boring or exciting, depending on the attitude of the person speaking. People usually get \_\_\_\_\_ of worship what they put \_\_\_\_\_ it.

Give me the Word of God to nourish my \_\_\_\_\_. 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 the 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 important because they were meaningful to him.

The Word of God should 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 eternal \_\_\_\_\_ (John 12:50) and the truth that sets you \_\_\_\_\_ (John 8:32). The gospel is the message of grace, hope, peace, and love. It will teach you how to live victoriously in this life and how to \_\_\_\_\_ God on the Day of Judgment with confidence. The Bible is God's \_\_\_\_\_ of love and truth. It will teach you how to avoid the pitfalls of life and will give you purpose and direction. As the Divine book, the Bible will open the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ for your life. A sincere \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word can never be boring to one who wants to know and to please God.

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

As for judging, the real \_\_\_\_\_ for making judgments about right and wrong is still God's Holy Word. The Lord Jesus said, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with \_\_\_\_\_ judgment" (John 7:24). If God calls something sin, it's sin whether we \_\_\_\_\_ with God or not. God knows His will, and He only \_\_\_\_\_ things sinful because they are evil 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 enough to tell them the \_\_\_\_\_ about sin. That's not being "judgmental"; it's being \_\_\_\_\_. 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 sin and salvation. 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 ignore the subject of sin and let you \_\_\_\_\_ your consequences. I'd tell you sin is "no big deal"; "there's nothing to worry about!" To remain silent about sin or to \_\_\_\_\_ about sin is cruel, cruel, cruel, and very uncaring. Telling people the truth about sin is kind. Don't be so quick to judge your neighbor at church.

Fourth, someone says I'm so busy I don't have \_\_\_\_\_ for church. When I hear people say 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. God will require your soul of you, and you'll \_\_\_\_\_ you could go back in time to change things.

The Lord Jesus knew 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 \_\_\_\_\_ to you" (Matthew 6:33). Putting the Lord first means spending time with Him and His family. We're going to be at church, and you're going to worship and to serve Him because you \_\_\_\_\_ Him.

The Bible says: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we'll go to such and such a city, and we'll spend a year there and engage in business and will make a profit.' Yet you don't know what your \_\_\_\_\_ will be like tomorrow. You're just a \_\_\_\_\_ that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. And instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord \_\_\_\_\_, we will live and also do this or that.' But as it is, you \_\_\_\_\_ in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows the \_\_\_\_\_ thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:13-17). The right thing to do is to \_\_\_\_\_ worship with a church.

Fifth, some say, "I don't \_\_\_\_\_ connected." Some folks find it hard to make \_\_\_\_\_ at church the way that they would like. The best way to make friends is to \_\_\_\_\_ a friend. Proverbs 18:24 says, "A man that has friends must \_\_\_\_\_ himself friendly." If you come to church, and you are late and then you leave as soon as the final "amen" is said, you'll probably \_\_\_\_\_ make as many friends at church as you'd like. Instead of waiting until everyone comes to you, you reach out to others. Get involved at church in some \_\_\_\_\_ work. Learn people's \_\_\_\_\_. 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_. I hope that you haven't done that.

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

When people return to church they find that they \_\_\_\_\_ closer to God. The Lord wishes all people "might grope for Him and \_\_\_\_\_ Him, though He's not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our very being" (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 Son Jesus for your \_\_\_\_\_ because He loves you. He gave you the Bible so that you might \_\_\_\_\_ Him and love Him. Church will help you know Him even better.

When people return to church, they find that they improve their personal understanding of what the Bible \_\_\_\_\_. The Word of God is an amazing book filled with \_\_\_\_\_ and truth. A lifetime is not enough to know everything the Bible teaches, but many people \_\_\_\_\_ their minds on everything else but this great treasure of spiritual knowledge, found in the Word of God. The Bible says, "Be diligent 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, attend Bible classes and worship at church.

When people return to church they find \_\_\_\_\_ in the religious training of their children. Raising children in our society, that's nearly a pagan society, is really tough, and parents need all the \_\_\_\_\_ they can get. The church provides an environment where people want to \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord and to live righteous lives. Churches provide moral and spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ that make a lasting impact on young lives. Every child \_\_\_\_\_ a church family. 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 \_\_\_\_\_ of handling daily challenges better than before. The Bible says, "casting all your anxieties (all your little worries) on him, because he \_\_\_\_\_ for you" (1 Peter 5:7). At church you can pray with brothers and sisters in Christ and \_\_\_\_\_ from the Bible how the faithful people of the Bible dealt with their problems. 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. They've found the comfort of God and are able to comfort others and help them through their struggles. The apostle Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be \_\_\_\_\_ to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

The church is a \_\_\_\_\_ to us all. The Bible says, "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But \_\_\_\_\_ to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if we lie down together, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm \_\_\_\_\_? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can \_\_\_\_\_ him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart" (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.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "and let us consider \_\_\_\_\_ to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking (forsaking is not missing, but quitting) 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." Church is where people \_\_\_\_\_ each other up spiritually and grow close to God. We all need that strength and encouragement that comes from being \_\_\_\_\_ the people of God.

Occasionally I hear of someone who's had a \_\_\_\_\_ experience at church. Someone has offended them or overlooked them. They \_\_\_\_\_ to this disappointment by quitting the church. If someone wrongs you, rather than quitting the church or quitting the Lord, why not try a \_\_\_\_\_ 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've gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15).

When you quit church, you're actually letting something come \_\_\_\_\_ you and God. When you push \_\_\_\_\_ out of your life, you also put your soul in jeopardy. Listen again to Hebrews 10:25-26 (read in the transcript). 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, come to the Lord in faith and come with love by repenting of your sins, confessing the name of the Lord, and by being baptized. In baptism the Lord will wash away your sins and add you to the church. It could be as a Christian you've become one of the unchurched. Come back to the Lord, come back to His church. Don't let your heart grow hard. Come back and find the love of God, and be right with Him.