



What Do Many Church Members Miss?

(Neal Pollard)

It is an eclectic club. Some of its members have only ever come one service per month, whose perceivable spiritual progress has been hard to measure. Others, perhaps more tragically, have waned from greater faithfulness in the past to the more tepid attitude toward the assemblies at which God is always present.

The Bible makes it clear that those who fail to put Christ first have put something in that place. This is an unenviable position to be in. Yet, these who neglect faithful attendance deprive themselves of so much.

They miss information. Bible classes, sermons, table talks, and mid-week devotional talks all help increase our knowledge and strengthen our conviction in what we already know. This information is like a flashlight for the journey in a dark, dark world (Ps. 119:105). If we take heed to that word, we do well (2 Pet. 1:19). To identify the enemy, you must know all about him.

They miss association. The people dearest to God are there. Christ, our Savior, friend, older brother, King, Shepherd, Door, and Mediator, is there. The earliest Christians were steadfast in fellowship with each other, a fellowship contextually shown to be spiritual in nature (Acts 2:42). Paul reminds us we should prefer one another, something we fail to show when we give preference to some other place and event (Rom. 12:10).

They miss inspiration. We need our spirits lifted. Others need us to lift their spirits, too (Heb. 10:24; cf. Phil. 2:3-4). In worship we can get our spiritual batteries charged. Coming together helps us each face the world. We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:23-24). The assemblies aid us in this.

They miss provocation. Often, we do things we know we should not do. As such, we need to be provoked or stimulated to do what we already know is right (Heb. 10:24). At the assemblies, we lift each other up and hold each other's hands in our common life (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).

They miss edification. We have a responsibility to be here and build up

other Christians. Remember, love edifies (1 Cor. 8:1). You cannot do that as well from a remote location. We are to use our abilities to help perfect the saints, to work in ministry, and to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12). That's a "done together" activity in which those withholding their presence cannot engage.

They miss immunization. The world is infected with sin and it is often hard to live for Christ (cf. 1 John 5:19). We can and do "inject" ourselves with strength at every service, an injection that will help us fight off the cancer of sin (cf. Jer. 7:18). Attending all the services strengthens our spiritual health (Ps. 42:11). Who thinks he or she is better equipped to fight alone than with the collective help of the church as well as the special strength available as by God's design when we assemble together?

They miss jubilation. There is nothing as seemingly miserable as the Christian who feels that it is his "duty" to come to the services (look at David—Ps. 122:1). It is a shame that "S-M-O" Christians miss the excitement of baptisms and others who come forward for prayers, the encouragement of seeing new Christians participate in worship or young people demonstrating their faith, and the example of others whose words, actions, and attitudes make us glad we are Christians. Few whose hearts and minds have been fully engaged in an assembly will walk away regretting it or being more depressed than when they arrived.

They miss obligation. We are mutually accountable (Rom. 1:14; Heb. 3:13; Col. 3:13; etc.). We are indebted to God (Rom. 8:12). We are commanded by Him to come together (Heb. 10:25).

None of these obligations comes with an expiration date. We consider those who shirk their obligations to be irresponsible. What obligation outweighs the one laid upon us by the Lord? The many, many principles of scripture lead to an unavoidable conclusion. We should want to be together with Christ and His people at every opportunity. If we do not want this enough to make it happen, maybe something is terribly wrong with our "affections" (cf. Col. 3:1-2).