

# Forsaking the Assembly

By Danny Simmons

Most churches in the United States today are plagued by the same problem. The church as a whole has taken a very relaxed position on attendance and its importance. I cannot speak for every church in America, so I will speak to this issue based on what I have seen. The consistent problem that I have noticed is that church attendance drops on Sunday evening and on any mid-week service that the congregation may offer. Attendance is always stronger on Sunday mornings. That has been consistent with all of the churches I have visited or have spoken to about this issue. It needs to be said that many members are doing well to be there. There are those who struggle with health issues and many other things that simply keep them from being at services more often. Please understand that this article is not intended to address those who cannot come. This article addresses those who could be with the saints, but simply choose not to attend. Has this attitude crept into the church over time or has this always been a problem?

**Psalm 95** gives us the very reason why we should look forward to our time of worship together with great anticipation! **Hebrews 3:12-15** commands the Saints to, “...*exhort one another daily, while it is called today.*” In **Philippians 1:27** Paul tells the church at Philippi, “...*let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ...stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*” How can the church be of one mind and one spirit while some of its members choose not to attend services? The verse that is most often used to address this problem is **Hebrews 10:24-25**. It says, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir*

*up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching.”* An answer must be given! Why do we choose to forsake the little bit of time we have set aside to strengthen one another, especially as we see the Day approaching? Please understand that when you decide to miss services you are not encouraging your brethren, you are discouraging them. Sure, that is not your intention but it is one of the unintended consequences of not coming together as a whole church to worship God. We know when the church meets but the cares of this world have choked out our desire to worship God and exhort the brethren (**Mark 4:18-19**).

I was given the opportunity to read a letter from a concerned member who was trying to reach out to another saint whose attendance was very weak. These beautiful words were penned in August of 2005. Please read this letter and see how your presence or absence will certainly affect the others.

**1 Samuel 20:18** *Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed because your seat will be empty.”*

Dear Member,

The scenario above depicts us when we are absent from the services to God in His house. We are missed by those who love us and are seeking only the good in what we can give to one another when we come together in services to our God. Remember our Savior’s death on the cross. Now, consider what we give God in return for loving us so much that He gave His only Son to carry and bear that cross on Calvary.

When there are empty pews in our services, we are sending a message to one another, to our God, and Christ that may say, “You are not important enough for me to be there and share in the worship that you are offering to God and His Son.” Just as Saul wanted to destroy David, the world wants to destroy the Christian and the Christian’s faith. The world will continue in its pursuit to destroy us, because (I hope) they see God and Christ in us and how much we desire to worship and serve them.

What about the influence that you have on your children for the rest of their lives? What about the emphasis you have placed on their hearts and minds to help them work out their own salvation, and how important it is for them to be faithful to God first and foremost? The greatest inheritance we can give to our children and grandchildren is to equip them with knowledge and a love for God, as we encourage them to follow Christ’s example of complete obedience to God. Parents must lead by example.

I know you love your children, we all do. If all we leave them in this life is of material value, then we have left them nothing. To love our children is to equip them with the solid foundation of understanding where they come from, why they are here, and where they will spend eternity. It’s with that understanding that they will be able to defend themselves from the evils of this life. Your children will enjoy the blessings and benefits of serving the true and living God as they look to you as an example. If worshiping God is not deemed worthy of your time, your children will see that. Live for God!

This letter is not written to judge, condemn, or criticize you in any way. It comes to you from a heart that is saddened each time your pew is empty in the assembly. I love you with all of my heart and we are fighting

together for the same cause as do the rest of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We strive to be faithful in our service to God, a God who deserves our very best in worship and service. The matchless faith and obedience of Christ should be our goal as we do our very best to serve God in the name of Jesus. We glorify God and encourage one another every time we assemble. We are of the same mind and we worship in the same Spirit as we dedicate our lives to the giver of life. May God bless you, and strengthen you as you determine in your heart that you will be what God has commanded you to be.

In Christian Love,

(Letter slightly edited by Danny Simmons)