

# Ten Good Reasons To Be in God's Family

## Ten Good Reasons

I hope you grew up in a family full of love, peace and joy. If this experience was not among your blessings, many people with similar childhoods have found the spiritual family Christ offers to His followers, to be an opportunity to experience much of what they missed. Like Jesus, they can say, *“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it”* (Luke 8:20-22).

- Scripture says that Jesus purchased the church at the cost of His own precious blood (Acts 20:28). Is it not rather audacious for any soul to say to God, “I want salvation, but can I opt out on being part of that relationship for which Jesus shed His blood?” Life is about relationship. Life is about loving and being loved. May we always instead respond with gratitude.
- Regardless of how social you are by nature, God created us to thrive in social environments, and thus many commands concerning worship such as singing (Ephesians 5:19), and the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7) are group activities, and thus by their nature, demand participation in congregational worship.
- For your own good, and the good of those in your spiritual family, we are commanded to assemble with other Christians and encourage them (Hebrews 10:24).
- I am to support and encourage the elders—and I can’t do this if I am not a member or not regularly present (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:11-14).
- When one has intertwined his or her life with Christ's spiritual family, one gains relationships with older and experienced Christians willing to keep a loving eye on him or her (1 Peter 5:2). The local congregation helps me if I begin to stray (Matthew 18:15).
- The apostles and the early Christians valued deeply being a part of the local congregation (Acts 9:26).
- I need the instruction gained in the classes that are offered (Acts 2:42). God, in His wisdom, knew that learning in a group is a very effective form of instruction, for we

benefit exponentially from the insights and experiences voiced during such the group gatherings.

- Accountability with others is quite spiritually advantageous, and can be a bit of a safety net and motivational toward doing my best for God.
- As a man, in the group I can develop skills, such as public speaking, personal relationship skills, compassion for the suffering, active listening, serving others and other leadership skills. There are no lone elders or deacons.
- I need people with me during life's darkest times, and to share my joy with during times of celebration (Romans 12:15).

## **Two Common Ways to View Our Attendance**

- The Going Out to Eat View

One writer made this analogy: Some people view their going to services and their level of involvement as being similar to when they go out to eat. They simply show up and everything has already been prepared. They just come, are seated, are served and when it is all over, they leave. At a restaurant you don't come early and help prepare the meal, you don't stay and do the dishes, and you don't hang around and talk with the staff. You eat and leave.

- The Meal with Family View

When you join your extended family for a meal, the level of involvement is far different from the above situation. You actually bring something to share. When you arrive you immediately pitch in and help set the table or assist in the kitchen. After the meal is over, you help with the clean up, and instead of leaving after you eat, you may linger around and talk. The Bible describes the local congregation as a family that I am part of (1 Timothy 3:15), not just a business I frequent now and then.

## **“They Just Want My Money”**

There are churches that are making constant appeals for money, but many others do not. Jesus had strong words for those who would use His church to "make a killing". "And He made a scourge of cords, and drove *them* all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." (John 2:15-16). So while God designed the church to sustain itself on the freewill offerings of its members (1 Corinthians 16:2), that financial burden we mutually share, and the fact that Americans have shown themselves to be among the most generous in the

world, there are likely more realistic reasons why many opt not to belong to a local congregation.

### **“I Don’t Like Organized Religion”**

What a person means by this is that they want to commune with God and learn about spiritual things by themselves. They want to pray or talk to God in the woods or contemplate spiritual things at a coffee shop. Sometimes they complain about the internal politics and drama associated with various churches. Yet the same people will often belong to organizations and attend other functions that have plenty of politics and drama. There's no getting around it: where there's people, there's drama. And no one likes drama. So what makes the blessings of being in God's family so outweigh the drama of bearing one another's burdens?

- **It is Healthy**

In describing the internal workings of a local congregation, Paul compared a local church to our own physical bodies. Then he said, *“But that the members should have the same care for one another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25). First, I need people caring for me, but I also need to learn how to care about others. Defining one's relationship with God as quiet times with Him fishing or in the woods is a beautifully romantic notion, but is completely useless in the service to my fellowman. Being a member of a local congregation helps me move away from **“my time, what is convenient for me, and everyone has to work around my schedule”** to adjusting my desires and sacrificing time on my schedule for the good of others. It makes sure my **“I's”** are not **“too close together”**. God created the local congregation as a vehicle for our encouragement and growth. Here is where you can learn how to serve others. Here is where you can learn how to get along with other people. Here is where you can discuss God’s truth in an honest way. Here is where you learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable. Here is where you learn to stand for something and sacrifice. The person who claims to have a relationship with God but does not want to belong to any church—is living in a simulator. That is not real life. Rick Warren made this observation: *“The local church is the classroom for learning how to get along in God’s family. It is a lab for practicing unselfish, sympathetic love...only in regular contact with ordinary, imperfect believers can we learn real fellowship and experience...being connected and dependent on each other...God’s mercy to us is the motivation for showing mercy to others. Remember, you will never be asked to forgive someone else more than God has already forgiven you. Whenever you are hurt by someone, you have a choice to make: Will I use my energy and emotions for retaliation or for resolution? You can’t do both.”*

- **Our Learning is Increased**

My growth will be stunted if I only read, study and think in isolation. I will more likely come to some wrong conclusions. An interaction with other faithful Christians will only maximize my growth (Acts 2:42). The benefits will be that wrong concepts in my head will be exposed quickly (Acts 18:26)—before they can derail my life. There will not be the future regret of, “Why didn’t I hear this years ago?” My life can go from “trial and error living” to simply opting for what is wise. The class teacher will teach a better class when the individuals in the class are prepared. The skills of others are far more effective when I am doing my part. I Increase the effectiveness of others: Acts 6:2-3

- **I Need the Accountability**

Knowing that I will be having people over to my home (Hebrews 13:2), attending a parenting or marriage class, or that my wife and I will be joining other couples for dinner really helps me become and remain the husband and father I need to be. Simply attending on a weekly basis and honestly answering simple questions like, “How are you doing?” brings a healthy accountability. The same is true with helping people move or joining in at a work day. People can immediately see what kind of worker you are, what your attitude about life is, and how you deal with setbacks. It is easier to misbehave when one is rarely around other spiritual people. When I am involved the elders do not have to spend time worrying about or checking on me, but instead can devote their time to other necessary things.

- **I Need the Perspective**

How very difficult to feel sorry for one's self when visiting a shut-in, talking with a widow who has lived years without a husband or finding out about what another Christian has had to overcome in life. Spending time with others long enough to know their hidden struggles, implants gratitude deep within my heart and motivates me to overcome.

- **My Talent is Increased Here**

The disconnected eye or hand from the body can't really do anything. The same is true with our skills. The lone wolf accomplishes very little. Only teams with team players win championships. The same is true in the spiritual realm (Ephesians 4:16).

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