

## **Why should Christians belong to a church?**

### **Relationships:**

Exodus 20-23 deals, discusses specifically the practical ways in which God requires His people to relate to one another. So those who have relationship with God have a relationship with one another.

Whatever makes the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian think that he is a god unto himself, he doesn't need anybody else to assist him in understanding his relationship with God, is purely a demonic deception. And yet people today think that they can be separated apart from each other and still reach an attempted goal.

You can't tell me that you can worship God at home by yourself better than you can worship when you are in the household of faith. That's why the Bible says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is. You need the body of Christ. One of the main reasons you need the body of Christ is because iron sharpens iron and you can't get correction when you are on your own, because you are only going to do those things you would find easy. But in the house of God you are going to hear the things you don't like. You are going to have exhortation, comfort, you are going to have correction and be challenged to change.

It is in your relationship with people – don't always shy away from people that you don't like, because God will bring people into your life that often times will become the flint that is sharpening the sword that God has given you. We need one another and the fact is that we have got to understand that our relationship to God is also an analogist to our relationship to a husband and wife and our relationship to the kingdom of priests. When is it going to return to the church that when you hurt, I hurt? When you get blessed, I rejoice with you for I am next!

Some people claim that they can get more out of the Word by walking on their own than from a "typical" sermon or teaching. Can a Christian survive apart from a church? Some Christians have no choice. They are trapped in a hospital bed, or working in an isolated area where no church might exist. And God is certainly sufficient to care for their needs. You can still go to heaven if you can't go to church. Most of these types of people, however, do submit to a church or some type of ministry. But even though it is technically possible to live the Christian life in isolation, it is certainly not the norm.

When you become a Christian, you are called into a relationship with God [1 Cor. 1:9]. But 1 John 1:3 makes it clear that we enter a fellowship that goes two ways – with God and with other Christians.

The New Testament never divides Christians into church members and non-church members. All the way through, it assumes that everybody participates in their local assembly. It gives no samples of Christians who belong to the "universal church" but have no link with a local church. In Acts 2:46 we see people coming together in a local church (the temple) and also moving from house to house (the Cell concept).

One scholar has said that, "any idea of enjoying salvation or being a Christian in isolation is foreign to the New Testament writings" (Alan Stibbs – God's Church, p.92). Wherever Christians are within range of each other in the New Testament, they meet. Every time the apostle Paul comes to a town in the book of Acts where there are no Christians, he wins a few converts and immediately organizes them into a small group that would then grow into a church.

Acts 20:7 reveals the practice of the early church: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." For Christians in every location, regular gathering was a part of life. As new converts got added to a home, a local church (temple) was established as only a few people could be accommodated in a house.

It is illogical to say that you are merely part of the worldwide, universal church or kingdom visionaries, yet you refuse to gather with the segment of that universal church or kingdom visionaries that exists in your geographical area. It would be like claiming you have a car, when the right fender is in Pretoria, the engine is in Durban, and the wheels are in Cape Town. You don't have a car, you have the beginning of the inventory for a junkyard. It just won't function until the pieces are put together. The church must be together to carry out many of its purposes.

Here are some irreplaceable pieces of the Christian that cannot happen when you live in isolation from a church:

### **1. Use of spiritual gifts:**

1 Cor. 12 makes it clear that God has given spiritual gifts to every Christian. Verse 7 states unmistakably that these abilities are not provided to make you feel good; they are abilities to minister, it should be used for the common good!

1 Pet. 4:10 command us to use spiritual gifts to help each other.

The same passage makes it clear that we meet with other Christians so they can use their gifts to strengthen us. God's gift of a preacher, teacher,

or any of the fivefold calling is wasted if no one comes to hear them speak.

**2. Mutual ministry:**

The church is pictured as a body in *1Cor. 12*, and Paul explains that each part of the body exists to meet the needs of other body parts. In the same way God intends each of us to meet the needs of other believers, using our strengths to help in their areas of weakness. *1 Cor. 12:21 expresses it this way; "And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor the again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'*" Neither can a Christian claim to be self-sufficient today.

The New Testament is full of "one another" commands and statements. We are to comfort one another [*1 Thess. 4:18*]. Build up one another [*1 Thess. 5:11*], confess our sins to one another and pray to one another [*Jas. 5:16*], and many more. How can we obey these directives if we stay away from the gathering of believers?

**3. Accountability:**

God designed the church as a place where spiritual leaders could watch out for our welfare, as a shepherd guards the sheep [*1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17*]. A Christian who answers only to himself can easily rationalize sinful attitudes or actions. Regular contact with other Christians can keep us sharp. A single verse should actually be sufficient answer for this question: *Heb. 10:25* warn its readers against "*forsaking the assembly of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.*"

We need to belong to a part of the Body for the sake of accountability and relationships; for the sake of becoming equipped and the equipping of others. How will we ever be able to take care of one another, edify each other if I do not know that my brother or sister has a need, a battle, a hurt, etc.? We need to belong, we need each other to be victorious – for united we stand, divided we fall.

## Why should a Christian belong to a church?

*Everyone should have a church to call home – a place to feel loved and be a part of a family –*