

1. Christians Grow by Attending the Worship Services

William Wordsworth—one of the great romantic poets of the 19th century—said:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon.

In the 21st century, we are still getting and spending in the most materialistic world ever. As we seek material things—homes, clothes, cars, entertainments, and stock portfolios—we often forget Jesus' admonition in Matt 6:31-33:

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Being Where the Lord Is

The urgency of being with the Lord demands that we not only be where he is; but if we truly love them, tell others so they may be there too. Andrew felt this urgency in John 1:40-42:

40 Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. 41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus.

If one were to say, "Come to this place and see the Lord, for he is there." We would all drop everything and go. Yet, we are so busy with our lives that we cannot go where the Lord has said that he will surely be. In Matt 18:20, he told us where he would always be, "20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." We all have responsibilities before our Lord. Will we let getting and spending get in the way of our spiritual service? The Lord has promised that where two or more come together, there He will be. Should we not come and bring our children to be there with him? Should we not urgently invite others? The best way to secure Christian growth is to be where the Lord is.

Attending Services—a Command of God

We should desire to be at the meetings of the church because the Lord is there. However, we should also attend these meetings because it is a command of God that we attend. In the middle of all our "getting and spending," we often put our spiritual service on the back burner—letting everything else come first. We hustle here and there; meet all our appointments for recreation, entertainment, and work. Yet, we often neglect the most important meetings of our life—those at church with our fellow Christians and our Lord Jesus Christ. God commanded in Heb 10:25:

25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Actually, this command is two-fold: do not give up meeting together, and encourage one another. It would be difficult, indeed, to forsake the assembly after we have encouraged others to attend. If we forsake the assembly, we miss those aspects of study and worship that see us through the trouble, strife, and heartache of life; and we are less for it; the church is less

for it; our weaker brethren and children are less for it. However, if we attend faithfully, we surely will grow spiritually.

The Lord's Supper—a Communion with the Lord

When we miss the worship service, we miss participating in those activities that refine and define our spiritual existence. One of these activities is the Lord's Supper. The Lord promised to be with us to take his supper in his kingdom. In Matt 26:27-29, the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper:

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

It is in this supper in his kingdom that we participate and fellowship with the Lord. Paul taught in 1 Cor 10:15-17:

15 I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. 16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

During the Lord's Supper, we declare the Lord's death until he comes, and we examine ourselves. In 1 Cor 11:26-28, Paul taught:

26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

To miss the services of the church is to miss the Lord's Supper. To miss the Lord's Supper is to miss communing with the body and blood of Jesus, to miss proclaiming his death until he comes again, and to fail to examine ourselves. A failure to participate with the Lord in his supper weakens us, making it impossible to grow as a Christian.

The Breaking of the Bread of Life—the Word of God

When we miss the meetings of the church, we miss the "breaking of the bread of life," which is the word of God. John recorded the teaching of the Lord in John 6:44-48:

44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life.

The early Christians came together to break bread as in the Lord's Supper, but they also shared the word of God. The very first Christians immediately began and continued in this practice. Acts 2:42 recorded this practice: "42 They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to the fellowship, to **the breaking of bread** and to prayer." Acts 20:7 records how those at Troas heard Paul preach when they came together for the Lord's Supper:

7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."

It is at these meetings of the church where we are to teach and admonish one another. Paul instructed us in Eph 5:19-20:

“19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He repeated this teaching in Col 3:16:

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Without your presence at the meetings of the church, can you teach and admonish your fellow Christians? Can they teach and admonish you? Surely Christian growth begins and ends with the nourishment that comes from “breaking the bread of life.”

Hurting Ourselves, Our Children, and Our Friends

The first step to growing as a Christian is to attend the services of the church. When we fail to attend, we hurt ourselves; and we hurt the church. However, beyond this hurt, we must think of the damage we cause to our children, our neighbors, and our friends. It is sad to see the lives of our young people fly fleetingly by with parents who are not bringing them to the services and to Bible study. We should remind ourselves repeatedly of Paul’s teaching in Eph 6:4: “4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” As for our friends and neighbors, the Lord’s own teaching in Matt 5:14-16 charged us to be an example:

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 6:31-33: What are Christians to seek first? What else will be given to us?
2. John 1:40-42: What was the first thing Andrew did after leaving the Lord?
3. Matt 18:20: Where can you always find the Lord?
4. Heb 10:25: What is a bad habit? What are we to do as we see the day approaching?
5. Matt 26:27-29: When would Jesus drink the fruit of the vine anew?
6. 1 Cor 10:15-17: In what do we participate when we take the cup? The bread?
7. 1 Cor 11:26-28: What do we proclaim? Of what are we guilty when we abuse the Lord’s Supper? What should we do before we eat of the bread and drink of the cup?
8. John 6:44-48: Who comes to the Lord? Who is the bread of life?
9. Acts 2:42: To what did the early Christians devote themselves?
10. Acts 20:7: When did the early Christians break bread? What else happened then?
11. Eph 5:19-20: What is one way for Christians to speak to one another?
12. Col 3:16: How do we teach and admonish one another?
13. Eph 6:4: How should fathers bring up their children?
14. Matt 5:14-16: What are Christians to the world?