

Hebrews 10:24-25: And let us consider how to stir up one another to love & good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, & all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Intro: We don't talk about church attendance because we just like having the pews filled or we want your money. We talk about it because God talks about it & because being here each Sunday brings glory to God, it's what God commands of you, it's what is best for your soul & for the souls of your children, it's what you have committed to as a church member here at Olney Baptist Church, & it's what love looks like – love encourages others to glorify God, obey God, fulfill their commitments & do what is best for their deepest and longest lasting happiness & joy.

Some Reasons People Don't Come To Church

a. Legitimate Reasons: 1) I'm sick (tune in online); 2) I'm on vacation (tune in online or go to a faithful church); 3) My cousin is getting baptized at another faithful church, etc.

b. Illegitimate Reasons: 1) I'm just too busy: The average church time in America is just about 90 minutes to 2 hours a week. For a grand total of about 4 days in attendance time an entire year. The average American spent 2 hours a day watching Netflix in 2020. That's about 600 hours or approximately 25 days a year. We are not too busy.

2) I'm too tired: Get to bed earlier on Saturday night; Prepare for worshipping God on Sundays; Sunday afternoons are for naps; Jesus is worth it (Anthony Alston example of coming to church after working all night).

3) I have really hard things going on in my life: So and so died; so and so is sick; life is hard – this is especially the time when you should come to church and be with God's people and hear God's Word

4) It's raining: Would this work as an excuse not to go to your job? Jesus is worth it! Loving others is worth it!

5) I don't feel like it: Ask for forgiveness; Ask God to change your heart; Come anyway, looking for joy in God

6) Our children have sports games: This is not a reason to miss church. Parents, you are teaching your children what is most important in life. What is most important in life is not playing games. Jesus is most important.

Dustin Bengé: There is a 0.0296% chance that your child will become a professional athlete. There is a 0.0086% chance that your child will become a famous celebrity. There is a 100% certainty that your child will stand before King Jesus on the day of judgment. What are you teaching your children? What are you preparing them for?

7) I'm concerned about my health: Jesus is worth it. **Elisabeth Elliot (*A Chance To Die*):** Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India for 55 years without a furlough, gave this advice to some young Hindu boys about following God's Word at the risk of their lives: "Two boys of the Vellala caste, one of the highest, told Amy that if they believed what she was telling them from the Bible they would be 'beaten until they were dead.' Her answer: 'It would be the greatest honor in all the world to be beaten until you are dead for Christ!'"

8) I've done other church related activities this week: I did evangelism; I went to Bible study; I went to a funeral/wedding; I went to Sunday School, etc. The Sunday morning church gathering is the one gathering of all of us together that we require members to attend, no matter what else you participated in during the week.

9) I'm a sinner: This gathering is for sinners! **James Boice:** To all who are spiritually weary and seek rest; to all who mourn and long for comfort; to all who struggle and desire victory; to all who sin and need a Savior; to all who are strangers and want fellowship; to all who hunger and thirst after righteousness; and to whoever will come — this church opens wide her doors and offers her welcome in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

H. B. Charles shared the post on Church Etiquette:

- Come. Never miss church unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Come Early. Rushing into church the last minute is not conducive to true worship.
- Come with your whole family.
- Be Devout. The church is not a theater or a place of amusement. Come to worship God, not to whisper, lounge, or sleep. God deserves our very utmost reverence.
- Help Strangers to find and follow the service. If they have no book or program, share yours with them. Sing and join in the worship! Don't just sit!
- Always Remember that VISITORS are the Guest of the Church members. Treat them with the same courtesy as you would if they should visit you in your own home.
- Give a Good Offering to God. God loves a cheerful giver! Freely you have received, freely give!
- Never Rush for the Door after the benediction as though the church were on fire. Speak and be spoken to.
- Never stay away from church because the church isn't perfect. How lonesome you would feel in a perfect church.

Articles from Allendale Baptist Church and Earl Blackburn

1) Go to church regularly because God tells you to: Hebrews 10:25: Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some.

Mark Jones: Willfully skipping church one week is not good, but a continued refusal to attend worship, without being hindered lawfully, is much worse and may be a sign of apostasy from the Gospel. **GOSPEL!**

2) Go to church so you won't be hardened by sin: Hebrews 3:12-13: Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

3) Go to church because you need the encouragement and you need to encourage others: Hebrews 10:25: But encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Spurgeon: Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.

4) Go to church to hear God's powerful Word preached: Hebrews 4:12: For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

D. L. Moody: Church attendance is as vital to a disciple as a transfusion of rich, healthy blood is to a sick man.

5) Go to church to be sharpened and to sharpen others: Proverbs 27:17: Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

6) Go to church to exercise your spiritual gifts: Romans 12:6: Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

Romans 12:6-9: Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

7) Go to church because you want to be used by God for good: 1 Corinthians 12:7: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good

8) Go to church because you are a part of the body of Christ: Romans 12:5: So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

9) Go to church to partner in the gospel: Philippians 1:5: Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

We are in this together! We pursue God together! We pursue truth and righteousness and holiness together! We pursue bringing others to Christ together! We pursue sound doctrine together: We're responsible for the teaching!

10) Go to church to mentor others and to be mentored: Titus 2:2-6: Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

11) Go to church to train up your child: Proverbs 22:6: Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Luke Engstrom: The greatest blessing my parents gave me? Bringing me Sunday after Sunday, morning and evening, to the same church for 18 years. Even when I desperately desired to attend my 10:00 a.m. championship soccer games. For that, I'm eternally grateful . . . Would you ever attend a wedding without the bride? Of course not! Then why do we try to get Jesus without the church?

12) Go to church to love one another: Galatians 6:10: So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith

If you are a member of Olney Baptist Church, being here is a promise you have made to God and to one another: **Church Covenant:** I accept the responsibility for this church's upbuilding, and to this end I commit myself to wholeheartedly support this church in its local and world-wide ministry with my time, abilities, and possessions.

13) Go to church to show the world the love of Jesus: John 13:35: By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

14) Go to church to bear one another's burdens: Galatians 6:2: Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

15) Go to church to stir up one another to love and good works: Hebrews 10:24: And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

16) Go to church to celebrate baptism and fulfill the great commission: Matthew 28:19-20: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

17) Go to church to celebrate the Lord's supper: Matthew 26:26-28: Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

18) Go to church to care for one another: 1 Corinthians 12:25: That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

19) Go to church to suffer together: 1 Corinthians 12:16: If one member suffers, all suffer together.

20) Go to church to rejoice together: 1 Corinthians 12:16: If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

21) Go to church because the body needs you in order to grow: Ephesians 4:15-16: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Dane Ortlund: Staying home to "watch church" is like staying home from a friend's wedding to watch the ceremony virtually. And keeping your wedding gift with you. Your presence and solidarity and love and hugs and eye contact and singing are needed. It's not just about passively receiving something. It's about being an embodied part of the celebration. The whole event is diminished by your absence. And you have a gift to give.

22) Go to church because every part of the body is indispensable: 1 Corinthians 12:21-22: The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

23) Go to church to remind one another of what we were created for: Eph. 2:10: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

24) Go to church to live out the reality of who you are: 1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

25) Go to church because we proclaim his excellencies better together: 1 Peter 2:9: A people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

26) Go to church to remember who you belong to: Peter 2:10: Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people.

27) Go to church to get equipped: Ephesians 4:11-12: And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

28) Go to church because we are going to live in glorious unity with God and each other for all eternity: Revelation 21:3: And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

29) Go to church to pray, sing, and worship the LORD with God's people: 1 Timothy 2:8: I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling

- **Colossians 3:16:** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- **Hebrews 12:28-29:** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.

30) Go to church to be reminded of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is of first importance: 1 Corinthians 15:1-6: Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one

time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

32) Go to church to join in the earthly expression of the heavenly assembly with innumerable angels:

Hebrews 12:22-24: But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³ and to the assembly [church] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Herbert Vander Lugt: One Sunday morning while traveling in West Virginia, we visited a small church in a tiny village. Only 15 people were present, yet they radiated joy as they sang. And the pastor preached from the Bible with enthusiasm. But I couldn't shake a feeling of sympathy for him and his people. With little chance for growth, it looked like a discouraging ministry. But the testimony of a young seminarian showed me how wrong I was! Assigned to minister in a small village chapel, he was dismayed when only two people stayed for the communion service. As he read from the liturgy, he came to the words: "Therefore, with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we worship and adore Thy glorious name." That sentence changed everything for him. In his heart he said, "God forgive me. I did not know I was in that great company." When we came to Christ in faith, we joined an invisible host of companions, what the writer of Hebrews says is an "innumerable company of angels," and "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (12:22-23). Keep this amazing reality in mind as you worship God. It will give great meaning to every service, whether thousands of fellow worshipers are present, or just two or three.

33) Go to church to show forth God's manifold wisdom to rulers and powers in heavenly places: Ephesians

3:10: so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

34) Go to church to delight yourself in the LORD Jesus Christ and declare that He is all in all: Psalm 37:4:

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- **Philippians 3:7-8:** But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

- **Colossians 3:11:** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Earl Blackburn: Being faithful and consistent in attending a true church of Jesus Christ and worshiping God is extremely important; more important than you may realize. Irregularity and unfaithfulness in attending church conveys a certain message and produces definite short term and far-reaching effects. Failure to assemble yourself with the Lord's people at all stated meetings for worship, unless you are sick or legitimately hindered:

1. Reveals a cold heart and lack of fervent love to Christ who instituted local churches (Revelation 2:4 & 3:20).
2. It shows disregard for the apostolic example and command of God's Holy Word (Acts 2:41 ff.; Hebrews 10:25).
3. It robs you of blessing and help for the days ahead.
4. It cheats the brethren of blessings and help they would receive from your mutual ministry to them (see 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good works." NIV).
5. It grieves the Holy Spirit who dwells in each believer individually, and in the church as a whole.

6. It grieves the Elders who oversee you and minister the Word of God to you (Hebrews 13:7 & 17; cf. I Thessalonians 5:12, 13).
7. It can influence others, by your poor example, to become unfaithful, lazy, indifferent and selfish. (Many young Christians have said, “Brother or Sister So-and-So do not come regularly, why should I?”). You are a letter known and read by all men (2 Corinthians 3:2,3a).
8. It discourages brethren in the body with whom you are joined.
9. It is a poor testimony to unbelievers who see your inconsistency (see John 13:35; cf. 1 John 3:13, 14).
10. It demonstrates your lack of vision for the future of that particular church of Jesus Christ in which you are a member (see Jeremiah 29:10,11).
11. It makes you a covenant-breaker in your commitment to God and to the church where you are a member.
12. It is a dreadful and empty step toward backsliding and apostasy (Hebrews 10:25 in its context of verses 19-39).
13. It shows disrespect for the best and the brightest day of the week, Sunday-the Lord’s Day, the day on which the Lord Jesus rose from the dead.

A Christian is saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and this saving grace causes one to love Christ’s churches, (Psalms 27:4, 84:1,2 & 10, 87:1-3). If there is no love for Christ’s churches or no concern to be identified with a local church, then one’s faith is suspect. True and saving faith creates a love for the things Christ loves. He “loved the church and gave Himself for it;” (Ephesians 5:25). John Owen puts it well when he says:

It is the duty of everyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ, and takes due care of his own eternal salvation, voluntarily and by his own choice to join himself to some particular congregation of Christ’s institution . . . no particular person is to be esteemed a legal, true subject that does not appear in these His courts with a solemn homage to Him. (Works, Vol. 15, ‘Duty of Believers to Join Themselves In Church Order,’ pp. 319-327).

May each of us say from his heart, as David said of old, “I was Glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Psalm 122:1).

Finally, how can it be that we have such a privilege as this to meet together as God’s people in God’s presence & delight in God as our chief joy, love, & delight? Only because Jesus Christ, the perfect God-Man, on that cross, was cast out of God’s presence & forsaken by His chief joy, love, & delight! He was cast out that you & I might be brought in & drawn close! He was crushed & His disciples scattered that we might be forgiven, redeemed, & gathered! And He rose up: on this day! This day of all days! This is why we meet! He is why we meet!

Christ Jesus Calls Us All To Meet
 Each New Lord’s Day To Taste And Eat
 The Riches Of His Food, A Treat
 God’s Word That’s Preached With Light And Heat
 All Solid Food, Our Life, Our Meat
 We Pray And Sing And Praise Repeat
 Stir Up To Love, Good Works Entreat

Fight Hard Hearts, Make Sin Retreat
 For Christ Has Died And Rose Complete
 And All Our Sins He Did Delete
 Oh What Love, Salvation Sweet
 Then How Can We Neglect To Meet
 For Christ Is All Our Mercy Seat
 We Meet With Him Our Love Elite!