

Attending Church

Do I need to go to church to make it into Heaven? I hear this question a lot these days, from all generations. So, today we will discuss what God's Word tells us on the subject. We will share thoughts and opinions as well.

Surprisingly, many people prefer not to go to church these days. There can be a multitude of reasons for not attending. From a bad church experience in the past, judgmental people in the Church, abuse, lack of transportation, money issues, etc. Personally, the biggest reason I hear today is that one would have to change their lifestyle / habits in order to feel comfortable attending church regularly.

Unfortunately, we know things do happen in churches that turn people away. However, the Bible clearly shows that God expects Christians to gather in fellowship. There is, of course, a debate amongst some Christians about how to interpret that.

We will answer questions about attending church today. One thing to keep in mind though, is that anytime we have a question about spiritual (even worldly) issues, we can always find the answer in God's Word.

Does one need to attend church to get into Heaven?

Let me just say, that one will never get into Heaven by their *works* or *good deeds*. Salvation isn't something that is *earned* by works. Christ did the work on the cross. We are saved by God's grace when we place our faith in Jesus Christ.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

So to answer the question. You will not lose your salvation by missing church or gain salvation by attending church. One saying that I've heard many times is: “Going to church won't make you a Christian any more than being in a garage makes you a car.”

It's when you place your complete trust and faith in Jesus Christ, that is when salvation occurs. Plain and simple.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

When you place your complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ, you will be born again. The Holy Spirit will begin to dwell within your body. He will lead you to truth, teach you obedience, rebuke and cleanse you from sin, give you spiritual gifts, etc.

[Group Questions]

Do you believe what we just discussed (above)?

What are your thoughts?

What draws you to church? What pushes you away?

Is it a Sin not to attend church?

In Ephesians 2:8-9, we learned we are saved by grace, through faith. That attending church may not have any bearing on our salvation, but it does have a bearing on our obedience. If you are not a member / regular attendee of a church, when nothing is physically keeping you from doing so, then you are not being fully obedient to God. Which translates to disobedience. Disobedience is sin. Obedience brings blessings. Disobedience brings negative consequences.

Romans 5:19 clearly states: [“For as by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many will be made righteous.”](#)

There will be times that things will happen requiring you to miss church sometimes. That's understandable. God knows your heart, but as Christians we have become a member of the body of Jesus Christ already. We should seek out a church that is Bible teaching / believing for fellowship.

We can see that God's Word clearly states that we are to fellowship regularly:

[“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”](#) (Hebrews 10:24-25)

[“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”](#) (Acts 20:7)

The scriptures above plainly show that Christians are to meet weekly, physically, to fellowship and lift one another up. Even before the Church was established (officially taking place during Pentecost), even Jesus Himself would teach regularly at the synagogues:

[“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,”](#) (Luke 4:16-17)

Satan would love for you to stay away from church. Because he knows you probably won't give cheerfully, or help that local church with your spiritual gifts. He will have ample opportunity to lead you into sin or false doctrines. Indeed, Satan grins when a Christian begins to backslide and stops attending church regularly.

[Group Questions]

Do you believe God calls us to Church?

After discussing the above, do YOU believe not attending church is a Sin? What are your thoughts?

The benefits of attending church:

- Attending church is an act of faith and of worship. You can worship God by singing, hearing His Word, giving, and many other acts of obedience.
- Attending church enables you to meet like-minded people. You can establish Godly friendships with others, lift up one another, etc. Many people have found spouses, established valuable friendships, business partners, and much more by simply attending church.
- Attending church helps you remain accountable to God. One function of the Church is to discipline you when you become ensnared in a sin and to help lead you back into fellowship and obedience with God. We all struggle and this will help us stay focused.
- Attending church enables us to learn God's Word. A Bible based church should have a pastor who teaches biblical principles, and also great Sunday school teachers that teach the Word on a weekly basis. This allows you to grow and mature as a Christian, as the Holy Spirit will continue working in your life. Remember, the Bible says: [“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” \(Romans 10:17\)](#)
- Attending church will enable you to use your spiritual gift. God gives us all a spiritual gift when we become saved and we need to use our gift to build up the body of Christ.
- Attending church will enable you to serve. In addition to your spiritual gift, attending church will provide ample opportunities to serve others. You can do this by volunteering time, money, or other resources to help the Church or individual members.

Lies you may hear from the enemy:

- **There are hypocrites and fake Christians at church.** This is sad, but true. Every church will have at least 1 hypocrite or fake Christian in the congregation (perhaps much more). Should that stop you? There are many quack doctors, but if I'm sick, I'm going to go to the doctor. Wouldn't you? There may be fake Christians and hypocrites in the Church, but I also know there are real Christians there and I want to fellowship with them. Don't you?
- **You're a sinner and you won't fit in.** Actually the opposite is true: If you had never sinned, then you wouldn't fit in. Church is nothing more than a bunch of saved sinners who finally admitted their sins and decided to do something about it. You will fit right in. If the Holy Spirit is convicting you to go to church. Pray to Him for help to guide you where you will feel comfortable and fit in.
- **They only want your money.** Yes, there are churches out there that are money hungry, but God calls you to give cheerfully anyway. If you don't feel like your church is using your funds faithfully (or are fake / crooks), then change churches. Don't disobey God! I'm happy to give to ministries / missions. Because I know how God has reached my own heart, and I want others to be as blessed as I am.
- **You're too shy and anxious, or you may feel uncomfortable.** I'm as introverted as they come, and I struggled heavily with this one. Nevertheless, God has called us to do it. Once you start going, then you'll begin to loosen up over time and make new friends. Pretty soon, you'll feel right at home.

Closing:

So, after discussing and reading the above, along with God's Word, should you miss church? Sure, there will be instances from time to time that cause you to miss church. Let's face it, attending church is a wonderful thing. However, it shouldn't interfere with other responsibilities that God has given us. We know there are some churches that have so many events that you would have to leave your family and quit your job to attend them all. While some Christians may think that would be the obedient thing to do, it is not what God has called us to do.

Many churches have multiple services, and even locations, during the week. You should try to attend at least one service per week. You may have to miss a week from time to time, but don't let silly reasons keep you from attending church. If you aren't sure if your reason is legitimate, seek out the answer in prayer and in God's Word. If you aren't comfortable standing before your pastor, explaining why you missed church, then you should probably be in church.

Some may have health issues or other legitimate reasons for not attending church on a regular basis. God certainly understands this. Those people should create a "Church" atmosphere at home as much as possible with family and friends. Listen to sermons on-line, participate in on-line ministries such as this one, sing hymns with family, and ensure they are doing all they can to be obedient in whatever ways God allows them for their current situation.

[Group Questions]

Do you attend church regularly? If so, why? If not, why not?

What are your thoughts on creating a "Church" atmosphere outside of a traditional church?

What is your interpretation of Matthew 18:20?

Is Church defined by the building (brick and mortar) or the people within it?