

# *It Is Written*

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## *"I Don't Go To Church"*

By Dan Chaney

*"I'm a Christian, I just don't go to church."*

Maybe you've been burned by religious people. Maybe you have social setting anxiety. Maybe you just prefer other recreational activities on Sunday. Individual motivations really aren't the focus of this post.

"I'm a Christian but I don't go to church" sounds reasonable, possibly even preferable. It's similar to the phrase you used to hear "I'm spiritual but not religious." Being dismayed or soured on organized religion is a real thing. So these phrases sound reasonable -- the problem is, they're just not biblical.

Collective worship is God's idea!

The word "church" itself means "assembly" (*ekklesia*).

Church = regular assembling!

*"I find God in the woods."*

*"I do a lot of my own devotions."*

*"My family worships via livestream."*

All of those ideas are great! In fact, if you're not engaging with God like this outside of collective worship your spiritual life is probably anemic. The issue is: those are all Monday through Saturday things! And to be honest, the mentality of those statements, if that's all I'm doing, is a little on the selfish side.

God calls us to collective worship on Sunday (Acts 20:7, I Cor. 16:1-2). Hebrews 10:25 tells Christians not to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together." Do you know why Hebrews 10:25 is so important? Because I can't do Hebrews 10:24 if I'm guilty of Hebrews 10:25. If I'm not there, I'm not "considering how to stimulate others to love and good works."

You see, God's design of assembling is about more than just me! Bear one another's burdens. Confess one to another. Sing together. Break bread together. There is no "church" without "together" ... consistently together! We can't fulfill those "together"s even if we're assembling, but it's infrequently or inconsistently. And we're robbing ourselves of God's blessings, we are outside of His will for us, if we're not consistently worshipping together.

This is not about attendance keeping, a tally sheet being kept somewhere recording how often folks "show up." I pray what it does is to provoke Jesus-minded people to fulfill God's design for their spiritual life. "Church" is a blessing!

Let me quickly speak to this. If you've been burned by church people or disappointed in God's people, well, I'd probably say "Join the club. We all have." Anytime you get multiple personalities together, friction is a guarantee. I'm not excusing all ungodly behavior. Some groups should be abandoned. I'm just begging you, don't let the actions of a few cause you to throw away the whole concept.

I think part of God's design of "together" is to encourage us to not be selfish. We can't always get our way. Sometimes going through a difficult situation with people we disagree with can actually be a healthy thing for us and develop bonds that would never have been that strong without the adversity.

So please, from my heart, consider regularly worshiping somewhere. Get plugged into a local church somewhere. Actively serve others and let them serve you. For your benefit and for God's glory!

# "Let There Be No Strife"

By Steve Klein

When contention arose between the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abram, "Abram said to Lot, 'Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren'" (Genesis 13:8). God's friend Abraham knew that brotherhood demands the cessation of strife. I fear that some brethren today believe that brotherhood demands incessant strife.

Some practical measures for keeping peace include the following:

## **1. DO NOT START A QUARREL!**

Proverbs 17:14 says, "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts." While it is true that there are principles of truth that must be defended, argued and contended for (Jude 3, Philippians 1:17), MANY quarrels among brethren are over things that have not even been revealed in Scripture. Others involve judging hearts and motives by appearance, instead of judging with righteous judgment (as Jesus instructed in John 7:24). This kind of strife should be nipped in the bud! We must simply "avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Timothy 2:23).

## **2. DO NOT SPREAD TALES!**

Nothing fans the flames of strife more effectively than gossip. Conversation that is seemingly well meant can provide fuel to a fire that would otherwise die out. When a brother begins a conversation (or e-mail message) by asking, "Do you know what brother so-and-so said about you?" he may mean well, but what follows is usually combustible! "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases" (Proverbs 26:20).

## **3. LOVE YOUR BROTHER.**

"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins." (Proverbs 10:12). It is amazing how easy it is for folks to tolerate the faults of their loved ones, family, longtime friends, etc., while at the same time refusing to tolerate similar or lesser faults in those outside their circle of friends. If we could learn to show love, without prejudice or partiality, we might find a lot less to pick at in others (cf. 1 Timothy 5:21).

## **4. FORBEAR.**

The instructions given in Ephesians 4:1-3 for "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace " include" forbearing one another in love" (KJV). According to Strong's Dictionary "forbearing" means to "put up with, bear with, endure, suffer". Some have the idea that they "don't have to put up with" anything from a brother in Christ. Nothing could be further from the truth. Even if you are being unjustly mistreated, "putting up with it" and taking it patiently is one of the truest marks of a follower of Christ (cf. 1 Peter 2:20-21). Suffering real or imagined injustice from a brother is a sad excuse for causing strife. It's an excuse Abram would not use, and neither should we. We might learn to be more forbearing if we would stop and realize how much we need others to "put up with" us! "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." (Matthew 7:12).