

# Is It Only About Attendance?

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I am somewhat disquieted by the fact that so many seemingly mature Christians are basing their faithfulness to God on the fact that they attend the services. Maybe the fault for such thinking lies with gospel preachers who repeatedly emphasize that attendance is a sign of faithfulness. But it should be clear to any right-thinking person that while attendance is certainly a sign of faithfulness, it is not the only sign of faithfulness. Far too many Christians have put too much trust in the fact that they don't miss a single service.

Now I certainly would not seek to de-emphasize the importance of faithful attendance. The Scriptures enjoin such (Hebrews 10:23-25). However, I think we need to understand that there is more to living the Christian life than merely attending the services each week. And while there are some who have not yet learned that the faithful will want to attend regularly, we should remember that there is certainly more to living the Christian life than "showing up at church."

The Christian life is just that—a life. It cannot be turned on and off like a faucet. It is a continual and daily system—a peculiar way of living life. It is a daily project, one requiring dedication, constancy. For instance, Paul told the brethren at Thessalonica to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). That's a daily privilege, one to which the faithful child of God is committed—and that joyfully. When Paul says that we should "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:2), he implies that we are to present ourselves to Him on a daily basis. The Christian life is a continual, day-by-day way of living life. We are told to "set your affections on things above" (Colossians 3:2). That's not a one-time emphasis on spiritual matters, but a continual, never-ending spiritual determination. The Christian life is more than just attending services on the Lord's Day; it's a daily commitment to our God.

The child of God must adopt and develop spiritual attitudes. While that certainly requires faithful attendance at the services of the congregation, there is more to the development of these spiritual dispositions and inclinations than just being present on the Lord's day. These developments require daily measurements, daily determinations, daily devotion for their maturation. Singing with the saints, praying with your brethren, observing the Lord's death at His table are not just mandatory, but vital to the spiritual growth of the child of God, but spiritual maturity does not conclude there. There's more to it than that. Jesus said, "if you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed" (John 8:31). When do we "continue"? Each day. The Hebrew writer exhorts that we "exhort one another daily, while it is called today." And he reminds that "we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Hebrews 3:13, 14). It's just as important to be a good Christian on Tuesday and Thursday—on Monday and Friday—as it is on Sunday.

There is also the matter of continuance in the faith so as to endure in times of duress or fear. Virtue—moral courage—is necessary to face the temptations and adversities of life.

We do not, thankfully, face the fear of our lives because of our faith in this day and age, but the use of social ostracism and peer pressures of various sorts are present at every turn in today's world. It takes a good degree of faith and moral courage to face the pressures being presented by the forces of evil in our day. It is not just imperative, but absolutely necessary, that every Christian to attend the services of the church in order to be given the steadiness and determination furnished by it, but please be advised that daily Bible reading is also necessary in order to be prepared to "give an answer" for the reason of our hope (I Peter 3:15). And remember, most of the questions asked will not be at the services on Sunday, but in the workplace, the school room, or the ball field. We have to be ready every day of the week.

There is work to be done, personal progress to be made. Regular attendance on the Lord's Day serves the purpose of not only telling us what needs to be done, it stimulates to keep us focused on what has real value; it affords the opportunity for mutual comfort, familial affection; and it encourages zeal for the cause. It gives us a place to pour our hearts out in filial worship to God. But our service and devotion to God—even our worship of Him— it does not end at the church assembly on Lord's Day.

"Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee. Thus I will bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name" (Psalm 63:3-4).