

“Is it a Sin Not to Attend Church?”

Mondo Gonzales, Pastor

CrossRoads Community Church in New Lenox

www.ccc-nl.org

If you are not a Christian and reject the claims of Jesus the Messiah, then you have bigger problems than whether you attend church or not. This article is directed towards those who are believers; yet do not attend a local church for a variety of reasons. I read a book a couple weeks ago entitled, “Quitting Church.” It documented various reasons for genuine Christians giving up and abandoning the local church. I began recently preaching a series of messages on understanding the nature and function of the church. In the 1st sermon I asked for people to raise their hands if they had ever been hurt, offended, wronged, judged, or sinned against by a fellow Christian in the church. You can imagine the outcome. Everyone raised his or her hand. Christianity has never claimed that we are perfect, just that we are forgiven. So, it is obvious that when you get a bunch of forgiven sinners together to form a fellowship, you are still going to have problems. We should never be content with that and always be striving towards treating others the way Jesus intended, but we have to keep our expectations realistic and biblical.

Here is my main point: there are many people who feel that the local church has no value for them or it's not worth getting involved. This is understandable in that some people are genuinely hurt, but it is inherently unbiblical and offends the Lord Jesus. Let me explain. We need to ask ourselves a few questions: 1) What is Jesus actively involved with right now? According to Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:47, 5:14 and many other passages, He is building His church; 2) How valuable is the church to Jesus? According to Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 1:19, the value of the church is infinite or at least equal to the precious blood of Jesus that He paid for it; 3) What is His purpose in the church? It is to demonstrate His wisdom for the whole world and even the angels to see as Ephesians 3:8-12 tells us; 4) What is His plan for the church? He is building it so it can be a dwelling place for God to live in as Ephesians 2:11-22 teaches us.

Have I ever been tempted to abandon the local church? I will admit that I have been hurt by those serving in the highest positions in the church and did think about leaving. In fact, studies have shown that 50% of all pastors leave the ministry in the first 5 years! Yet it is important for me to get beyond my own feelings and ask myself what Jesus wants. Who in the world am I to say that the church has no value either objectively or subjectively, when Jesus Himself deems the church of immeasurable value? Who am I to say that I don't need to be involved in the church when Jesus Himself is busy being involved in His church? Am I better than Him? Who am I to diminish the importance of the plan and purpose that the Lord Jesus has for His church by choosing not to be involved in it? The answer to these questions is that we are showing ourselves to be quite arrogant in us dictating to Jesus what true value is. Again, let's not diminish the hurt that many of us might have, but we need to forgive as Jesus forgave us (Ephesians 4:32).

There are many who claim to love Jesus but have gone AWOL. Let me ask this: can a person truly love Jesus when they don't value what He does, or do what He does (1 John 2:6)? I will leave it as a rhetorical question in that only God knows, but there is a challenge in the Scripture for all of us to not forsake joining together with the assembly of fellow believers (Hebrews 10:25). Neither can we say “we have no need of the church” as Paul reminds us (1 Corinthians 12:21). If it has been awhile for you in attending a church, let me encourage you to respond to the Biblical admonitions as well as the Holy Spirit tugging your heart. Take the obedient step, forgive, and come bless the church with your gifts and be blessed by the Lord in His Church. Have a great week!