

Why not church online? The lockdown showed me how comfortable it is?

In the aftermath of the 3-week lockdown, some of us might find ourselves asking why we should attend church. We can just pick and choose a sermon/preacher of our liking and listen or watch it online in the comfort of our own homes. Some questions need to be answered before we can make this decision.

Why attend a local church?

Ministering to one another

Unfortunately, ministering to one another online is very difficult, if not impossible. It will always be one way, from the pastor to you. You cannot minister, let alone know the people of the church you are "attending" online, never mind ministering to them with your gifts.

1 Peter 4:10–11

10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: 11 whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We are told that each one of us received a gift and that we are to use that gift to serve one another. Is there an easier way to help one another than through our local church? And the result of this service is Glorifying God.

Building the body

Colossians 3:16

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.

Paul says we are to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom as we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Again, this teaching and singing is to edify one another and can only be done in a corporate worship context. Please note, this is two-way traffic, never are we to participate in the body of Christ and expect one-way service.

1 Corinthians 14:26

26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

Notice Paul says "when" we come together, not if. Paul expected the Corinthian Church to gather together. It was also expected that each one had something to offer. And we will not delve into tongues prophecy and interpretation, but suffice to say that it points us to spiritual gifts. Some have fallen away, but we each still have active spiritual gifts, which need to be brought together regularly to build one another up.

Ordinances of Baptism and Communion

In Matthew 28 Jesus instructs us to baptize all people. This is a church function, which can only be witnessed and participated if you are bodily present. 1 Corinthians 11 gives us proper instructions how the Lord's Supper should be observed. And Paul says this instruction is from Christ himself. Again, not being present at church will exclude you from these two critical parts of church life.

Stirring one another to love and good deeds

Hebrews 10:24-25

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

How can we stir one another to love and good works if we do not meet? We should encourage one another, and though we could do it telephonically or through other means, it is much more effective when done face to face. Your local church should be the place you come to be encouraged and encourage others, build the body of Christ, and let God be glorified through the body.

God commands it

The passage in Hebrews makes it clear, we should meet together and not neglect it. It cannot be stated more straightforward than this.

You are denying others the chance to edify you

The flip side is also true. If you do not attend church, you limit and deny others the opportunity to build you up and serve you with their spiritual gifts.

Pastors also need encouragement and edifying, and sometimes just knowing that people will show up and be present at church provides much cheer for them. A lot of work is put into preparing all church gatherings, and not attending and taking the easy route disrespects their sacrifice.

Are there times when online/electronic church is OK

Yes, there is, and we are living such a moment right now. We are very thankful for the opportunity technology is affording us to minister to you through Whatsapp, Facebook, and our website. However, we pray that the Lord will be gracious to end this lockdown soon and resume our regular activities.

Online "church" material should be supplementary to your customary church attendance and never a substitute.

What if I cannot find a 'good' church locally? This is a difficult question, and as John MacArthur says, it is a sad reflection on churches not fulfilling their mandate in offering faithful, sound Bible teaching anymore. But if we look at some of the problems in the first New Testament churches, we cannot say they were perfect. But they were the ONLY churches available, and if you were a believer, you did not have a lot of choice but to attend. The fact is that no church is perfect, but you should look for the best you can find and attend and, through your presence, make it better.

In summary

It should be clear that our weekly corporate worship is not JUST a time of worshipping God, but a time of edifying one another while worshipping God. Our personal worship of God should be a continuous action right through the week, not just reserved for Sunday. Sunday is when the body meets to be built up, energized, and encouraged for the week ahead.

God did not design the church, Christ's bride and body on earth, to function in isolation. The foot needs the heart to supply it with blood; otherwise, it will wither and die. We need to meet regularly, in body, in Christ's presence, to ensure a healthy body of believers, fit to be presented to Him when He returns.

Hopeful and prayerful to see you all again soon.

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