

Think of these questions today as we look at attendance.

Do you think your attendance affects others?

Is your attendance encouraging or discouraging to others?

Im not talking about those that are sick, hurt, or traveling. Im talking about the empty seats because people are spiritually sick, spiritually lazy, or spiritually lukewarm.

Im talking about people who say, "I have more important things to do, than be at church today."

The empty seat is silent, the empty seat doesn't sing, the empty seat doesn't pray, the empty seat doesn't encourage.

The empty seat SHOUTS very loud.

Lets look at the importance of attending, being present and engaged in Gods work.

Please turn with me to Ephesians 4:11-16.

11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and

held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

If we don't assemble as the saints, we can hurt the spiritual growth of the church. The Body needs every working part to succeed in our goal of serving God fully. You, brothers and sisters are the body of Christ, verse 16 says being fitted by every joint, and the proper working of each individual! This is what causes growth of the body.

The Church, YOU, have a huge responsibility, YOU are to be putting God first in your lives.

Think about what this Church does throughout the year.

VBS, you all know that VBS is not the easiest thing to put together and carry out. Now imagine you are doing all of the planning, building, calling, buying, decorating, checking in, signing up, preparing food, teaching, leading...ect. ALONE!! What a huge burden for one person to do alone.

Church Meetings, two on Sunday and one on Wed. How often are you here for those meetings? What causes you to miss those meetings?

Church Revivals, Have you ever been to one? When you know one is coming, do you plan your week around the revival?

Church, these are just a few examples.

See God never intended for you to put anything before Him. It's always God, then the rest falls into place.

Mathew 6:31-33

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well

Many hands make light work. That's why God gave us the church, or the Body. If there is little effort put in by the body you become discouraged, where if everyone pitches in, and it turns out wonderfully, it is a big encouragement to YOU and God.

Your attendance can discourage potential Christians. Neglecting the gospel of Jesus Christ is a big deal.

Let's look at what God says about causing others to neglect the truth.

Turn with me to Luke 17:1-2.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. 2 It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

God tells us that it would be better to drown than to be a stumbling block to someone else. As a child of God, if you choose not to assemble, not only do you hurt yourself, but you potentially become a stumbling block to someone else. Your example, unfortunately people look up to you, you have a responsibility in God's word that we all need to take very seriously.

Parents have a huge responsibility, kids not going to church.

Quit making excuses, you want your children to be faithful to God and serve His kingdom, then you have to serve His kingdom. It starts with you!

You know who teaches your kids to evangelize? To reach the lost? You. If you're making excuses about serving in the Church your kids see that. They will follow suit.

If you make excuses on Sundays to not show up, you know who sees that, your children. I have made mistakes in my life, and when I do I typically think about how it has impacted my children. See I'm not perfect, but the Will of God is, so I need to ensure my kids are surrounded by it, to offset my negligence and inability to be perfect.

It's God who changes us and it's the Bible that gives us the Will, or the knowledge of how He wants us living. You have to make it a priority.

There's 2 things I have always remembered that was taught to me in this Church building.

1. Make the decision and stick to it.

Joshua 24:15

15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods you're ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

2. Don't pit God's word against itself, in other words don't use Bible versus on how you will live your life based on how you feel that day, if you want to be lazy that day, if you want to serve God that day.

2 Timothy 2:15

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

You have a responsibility in the Church and it starts by being present and available, at the very minimum Sundays and Wed.

If your seat is empty, it can not influence a lost person.

As Matthew 5:16 says,

“Let your light shine before men in such a way, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Finally, your attendance encourages Satan. The Devil wants the lost to stay lost.

1 Peter 5:8 says

“ Be of sober spirit be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around, like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.”

Your empty seat encourages satan to seek and pull Gods people away. Satan has many schemes and darts to hurl at you when you are weak.

2 Corinthians 2:11 says

“So that no advantage will be taken of us by satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

2 Corinthians 11:3

3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

And also 2 Corinthians 11:10-15.

10 As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, nobody in the regions of Achaia will stop this boasting of mine. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

12 And I will keep on doing what I am doing in order to cut the ground from under those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about. 13 For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Christians, YOU and ME, we have to reaffirm our LOVE to CHRIST. You have to be on guard from Satan at all times. You cannot allow Satan to have a foothold in your life! God has all the power, allow HIM to work in your life. Surround yourself with the body of Christ, not the world!

Put on the full armor of God,

Ephesians 6:10-18 it says.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God,

so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

In closing

Will You choose to be in your seats when the saints meet?

Will your life encourage others, or will it be a discouragement to other Christians and potential Christians?

Will you be a working part of the body, or will that limb be amputated from the body?

Will you choose to put on the full armor of God, or will you lay it aside and give satan a foothold in your life?

When Christ returns nothing will be important anymore. Nothing that held you back from serving will be important. No party, social status or gathering, job, money, stress, anxiousness, video game, internet, girlfriend, boyfriend. Nothing.

When your standing in front of Jesus and He's looking you dead in the eye, you will realize that the way your living maybe wasn't the way you should have been living, we will all face this, don't you want to know that what you did was your best effort? That what you put forth was your absolute best for God?

Mathew 25:14-30

14 “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

22 “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’

28 “So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

The choice is yours, and I pray you will make the right decisions in your life and meet when the church meets.

Thank you.