

The Need For Assembling
by Dr. Dennis Corle

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25)

Some folks think church is a good thing, but not really necessary or needful. I use the word ‘need’ very carefully. It’s not just something good, but something necessary. “Preacher, do you mean you have to go to church to get to Heaven?” No, you have to be born again to get to Heaven, saved. But if you’re going to live the Christian life, being faithful to church has to be part of it. To be obedient to God, to be blessed, to have victory over sin, you have to be in church.

We need oxygen. It’s not a luxury, it’s a necessity. We need food and water. It is a need, a necessity. Without it we will die. We’re living in a day when leaders have taken it upon themselves to declare church attendance “non-essential,” but scripture says they are wrong. The Bible says faithful attendance to the local church is absolutely essential for the child of God.

In Matthew 4:4 Jesus says, ***“...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”*** I am a soul. I have a temporary body. Just as much as we need food and water and oxygen for the physical body, we need the Word of God and the fellowship and spiritual sustenance of assembling at our local church for our spiritual life. It is vital to my spiritual growth and welfare, my soul being fed.

They tell us that Wal-Mart is essential, but church is not. There are many more people in Wal-Mart on any given day than they are saying you can have on the church property. Somehow there’s a magic immunity where it’s safe at Wal-Mart, but the same number of people in a church building is dangerous.

The liquor store is essential, according to the governor, but the church is not. So we need to feed people’s addictions, but not allow their soul to be fed? No, they need the Word of God and the man of God and the people of God and the blessing of God so they can break free of their addiction instead of continuing it, but they’re not allowed to assemble with the church.

According to the governor, gas stations are essential, and I’m glad they’re open, but churches are not allowed to have services. The only way these things are essential and the church is not is if we are like those in Philippians 3:19, of whom the Bible says, ‘whose God is their belly.’ Marijuana shops are essential. Lowes and Home Depot are essential. Even dog grooming is declared essential, but they say the church is not essential! If there is anybody who has a non-essential job, it’s most of these politicians taking it upon themselves to declare that obeying God in faithful attendance to the local church is non-essential! The main stream media are definitely non-essential, while they spew fear and do everything they can to stir up panic.

Folks, what the world thinks is essential is strictly material, temporal, carnal, and has absolutely nothing to do with your soul. Church is essential to my spiritual well-being. Fellowship

with my church is essential. Leadership and teaching and preaching from the pastor is essential. I am not depending on the government to protect me from a virus this year any more than I was for the last 50 years. The last time I checked, God promised to protect me. I don't need to live in constant fear. I need to depend on the promises of God.

Don't leave the will of God in an attempt to protect yourself instead of trusting in God to protect you. That's how Abraham and Sarah ended up in Egypt, and it was a disaster. Abraham left the Promised Land because there was a famine there, and made an unapproved trip without God's leading, to go down into Egypt searching for food. While there, he very nearly lost his wife, except for the miraculous intervention of God. His nephew, Lot, was corrupted, and later cast his eyes toward Sodom, because it reminded him of what he had seen in Egypt. They brought back a snare named Hagar, and later Abraham and Sarah gave up on God keeping His promise to them of a son, and decided to answer their own prayers and help God out. Sarah told Abraham to have a child with her handmaid, Hagar, outside of God's will, and we are still dealing with the outcome of that wrong relationship today, that crowd who's flying airplanes through tall buildings and killing innocent people. Abraham left the will of God in an attempt to care for himself and his family instead of trusting God to care for them in the will of God.

Do you actually think God is able to save my soul and make me a child of God and get me to Heaven, but He can't get me through a virus, or any other dangers I face? I'm telling you, nothing ever catches God by surprise. Nothing ever occurs to Him. He knew all about it before it took place, and I assure you, God is everything He claims to be and more.

When Moses stood before Pharaoh to lead God's people out of Egypt to assemble, Pharaoh posed several objections. First he said, "You go, but leave your children here with me. I care more about your children and their safety than you do." Everybody who believes that, raise your right hand! Do government leaders care more about your children than you do, and they can be trusted to do what's best for your children more than you can?

Next Pharaoh said, "Don't take all your cattle. Leave your possessions here so I have control of them and you have to come back."

Moses said, "Look, this is how God says it has to be done. Every hoof has to go. Every child has to go. Every man and woman has to go and worship God."

Pharaoh said, "Just do it here in the land," and Moses said, "We can't do that because it's an abomination to the Egyptians." Let me remind you that what is a blessing to Almighty God is an abomination to a secular society, and what is precious to secularism is an abomination to a holy God.

God tells us in Hebrews 10:25 that we are not to forsake the assembling of the church. ***"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*** (Hebrews 10:25) If you separate yourself from church, you'll not have the victory you intend to have. You can't glorify God like you're supposed to. You'll not have the impact you might have on the lives of others.

You won't grow in grace like you're supposed to. You cannot be what you're supposed to be as a child of God if you are not plugged in to a scriptural local church and regularly attending.

Somebody always argues, "The Bible says where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." Did you ever read verses 18 and 19? ***"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."*** This is an important prayer promise, but it is NOT the definition of what is a church. A church is an assembling. Listen friend, you cannot have an invisible assembling of visible people. God intended for there to be local churches that are lighthouses in local areas.

Hebrews 10 says, ***"Not forsaking the assembling..."*** First I want you to be aware that the very word 'church', the definition of that word is 'a called out assembling.' It is the word *ekklesia* -- a called out assembly. When the Bible says, ***"Not forsaking the assembling..."*** it is talking about a specific gathering, the local church. Use of the word 'forsake' does not mean I had a 104 degree temperature and couldn't get out of bed. Forsake has three definitions. To forsake means to abandon. To forsake means to leave behind. To forsake means to replace with something else. I'm not even permitted to replace church with some other good thing. God intended for me not to forsake, not to abandon, not to leave behind the assembling, not to replace the assembling, not even with some other good thing.

Some justify not being in church by saying, "I was doing something good." There are not only sins of principle, but also sins of order. Some things, in their very nature, are sin, and condemned in the Bible. But there are other things that are good as long as they are in their proper place. "What do you mean?" I mean when something takes preeminence to the will of God, it may have been a good thing, but as soon as it gets ahead of the will of God, that thing that was good in nature has become sin, because it's out of order. There's nothing wrong with a family reunion or a Little League game until it replaces church. God said, "I want you to put a premium on assembling." Church is important. It's needful. We are not to forsake, abandon, leave behind, or replace the assembling with any other good thing.

"...as the manner of some is;..." When the Bible talks about manners, we might use the word 'habits.' Habits never started that way, but something you develop over a period of time. If you have good or bad manners or habits, you developed those over time. Good habits or bad habits were not automatic at birth. You did something frequently enough until it became a reflex action. It just became normal, habitual. Habits are hard to break. That's wonderful if it's a good habit. But the Bible says some folks have a bad habit of missing church, not assembling every time the doors are open. He said that we're not to forsake the assembling. He didn't just say on Sunday morning. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner or habit of some is. Have you developed that bad habit?

Understand that if you never smoked the first cigarette, you won't develop the habit. You didn't walk by and catch a whiff, and it smelled so good you couldn't resist. I smoked before I got saved. At first I started out coughing, turning green, getting sick, but my buddies smoked and I had to fit in, so I did it frequently enough to actually develop an addiction. I had a need and a habit to where I craved the stuff, but it doesn't start out that way.

Regular church attendance is a habit, as well as a conviction and principle. You know you're in trouble when you start asking questions like, "Are we going tonight?" You're already in trouble in principle and you're going to develop a bad habit. People miss so much church it just becomes automatic. They don't even feel bad about it anymore. Eventually it feels more comfortable to stay home.

We have gotten things out of order in priority, as well. Work is not more important than church. You say, "I've got to make a living." Yes, but you don't need God, I guess. You wouldn't need God's blessing, right? We have justified a lot of things that have really hurt our spiritual lives because assembling is not optional if I intend to obey God. It's not an option if I'm going to grow in grace. It's a necessity, a need. Whether I recognize the need or not, God says it is.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." What day is that? That day when Jesus comes in the air to rapture His own. There is no prophecy that must be fulfilled. The rapture is imminent. It's going to be over in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, which General Electric says is 11/100 of a second. The trumpet will sound and we will be gone, and the world will be thrown into total chaos. I want to make certain that I'm in my place, obedient to God when He says, "Come up hither." No man knows the day or the hour, but if I were God, I'd schedule the Rapture for Wednesday night! Will you be in your place?

Paul spoke in II Timothy 4:8 about loving His appearing. ***"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*** I always loved my dad, but I didn't always love his appearing. He had a habit of appearing out of no where when I was showing off, acting like a fool, and I'd see him poke his head out from behind somebody, and I knew I was in trouble. Some folks who are saved will be ashamed before Him at His coming. They don't love His appearing, or they would be busy serving Him and ready to meet Him.

Our salvation is not at stake. When you trusted Christ it was settled forever. You have eternal life. But the day will come when we must give account for our works and the motivation behind those works. According to Revelation chapter four, those who receive crowns will be able to cast them at the feet of the Savior. One of those crowns is just for being faithful unto death. ***"...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*** He didn't say, "Be fearful unto death." He said, "Be faithful unto death." Faith always obeys according to Romans 16:26 which talks about 'the obedience of faith.'

What are we not to abandon, replace or leave behind? The assembling. The very word 'assembling' has to do with 'the completion of the collection.' Have you ever tried to play a board

game and didn't have all the pieces? Have you ever purchased something unassembled in a box? While it was unassembled, could you use it? Have you ever begun to assemble it and found out that you were missing one piece? It was not the biggest piece or the most visible piece, but without that one piece, it was not functional or usable.

Why do we think God is going to use an unassembled church? In Acts 2:1 the Bible says, ***“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”*** ALL. A-L-L in one place. They were assembled together. The Spirit of God swept through the place and they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Need I remind you that this is not long after the crucifixion of Jesus, and these believers were facing threats and persecution? There was danger, but they assembled anyway, because it's needful.

In John 20 the Bible says, ***“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:”*** The first day of the week in the evening. They assembled for a Sunday night service, but Thomas was not among them, and the Lord Jesus showed up in a special way.

I believe the Lord is in every service, but don't try to convince me that there aren't special times of anointing when the Spirit of God shows up in power. That can't be transmitted electronically. Church is not just a sermon. Church is an event. It's something that can't be replaced with looking at a computer screen. I'm thankful for the older folks who are shut in, that they can watch the church service and hear the sermon and songs, but it doesn't replace being part of it. I'm glad we have the capacity to communicate our message, but we better not lose sight of the importance of assembling together. We better not get too comfortable sitting on the couch in our pajamas, sipping coffee and criticizing the sermon instead of assembling with the people of God like we are commanded to do, with an open Bible and heart.

Thomas was not there that Sunday evening. Guess what happened? Jesus spoke peace to them in the midst of the turmoil all around them. He breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” When they told Thomas Jesus showed up, he didn't believe them. Did you ever notice when people aren't there, if you try to explain what God did in the service, they just can't imagine it was really that powerful?

We always hear this man referred to as ‘Doubting Thomas’. Listen to me. Thomas did not miss church because he doubted. Thomas was a doubter because he missed church. Romans 10:17 says, ***“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*** Thomas wasn't there, and because of that, he was filled with doubt instead of faith. He strayed instead of drawing nigh. Friend, the wolf is looking for the one who has strayed and distanced itself from the flock. Don't let that be what happens to you in perilous times like these.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” He’s not just the same yesterday and forever, and He skipped today. He’s the same today, right now, in the midst of our current circumstances. He’s the same God that He ever was, the same as He ever will be. All the promises of God in Him are yea and amen. My question is, are you in Him? If you are saved and in Him then maybe you ought to lay hold of the promises of God instead of the promises of man. Maybe you ought to trust God and live by faith instead of living by fear, believe God is Who He says He is, and He is able to do all that He promises to do.

“Exhorting one another.” He didn’t say the pastors are suppose to exhort the people. The text says we are to exhort one another. You’d expect the pastor to exhort and encourage folks, wouldn’t you? You’d be surprised if he didn’t try to get you to come to church. But God didn’t say all the pressure is on the preacher. He said that we, as believers, are to exhort one another. An exhortation is a challenge to try to get others to do right. Everybody has their weak moments and times of fear and uncertainty. When I’m strong, I need to bolster others, and when I’m weak, I need to be able to depend on their strength. We have a responsibility to exhort one another.

That’s why you must surround yourself with people who are wise. ***“He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”*** (Proverbs 13:20) That verse teaches us that everybody has peer pressure. I do not get to decide if I have peer pressure, but I do get to decide who that pressure comes from. If I choose wise and godly companions, I will be challenged to be more wise and godly. If I choose to be the companion of fools, I will become more and more foolish through their influence and reap the destruction of those foolish choices and actions. If we want to be disobedient to God, we can always find someone to justify us. People like that usually gravitate to one another.

If I’m going to exhort somebody else to do something, I first have to do it. For me to exhort you to come to church, I first have to come to church myself. To exhort you to be a soulwinner, I have to be one. If I exhort you to be a giver, I have to give. Whatever I’m going to have any influence with you to do, if I try to encourage you to do something, I have to first do it. Understand then, to obey Hebrews 10:25, the first thing I have to do is get myself in church every time the doors are open if I’m going to exhort anybody else to come. I have to be a good example of what I’m encouraging them to do. ***“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:...”***

“...and so much the more,...” That statement intensifies what He just said. ***“...and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*** Folks, He’s coming. Scoffers will say, “Where is the promise of His coming? For all things continue as they were from the beginning. You’ve been preaching that message all these years.” That’s what they said in Noah’s day, too, but the day of judgment came. That’s what they said in Sodom and Gomorrah, too, but the day came and they got caught by surprise, swept away in judgment because they were unprepared.

God said that if you and I really believe Jesus is coming, then we need to be more intense about our Christianity and more faithful to the house of God than we have ever been, more involved than we have ever been, doing more for Christ than we have ever done, if we really believe He’s

coming. I promise you this. You do not want Jesus to show up on revival night and you be sitting at the house. You don't want the Lord Jesus to show up on a Sunday morning and you're sleeping in that day. We don't seem to realize that He could really come today. He may come before this sermon ends. His coming is imminent, any second. If I believe that, it will affect me and what I do. I ought to be looking for Him, living in such a way that He's not going to catch me in an embarrassing situation, ashamed to face Him. ***“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”***

Out knocking on doors, sometimes I invite people to church, and they tell me, “I don't believe in organized religion.” What they mean is ‘I don't believe in going to church.’ My standard response to that is this, and it's logical, “What DO you believe in? Disorganized religion?” If you don't have order and organization, then you have confusion. First Corinthians 14:33 says, ***“For God is not the author of confusion...”*** God is a God of order. Have you noticed, no matter what's going on in the world, the sun always rises in the east and sets in the west? The seasons always rotate in the very same order, it never changes. If I have religion that doesn't have order and organization to it, it's not God's religion. It's not Bible religion. If my religion is not in line with the Bible, it's worthless. To worship Him, I must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The truth is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit never operates contrary to the Word of God. He'll always lead me in harmony with what the Bible clearly says. God is not the author of confusion, but if I don't have order, I have confusion.

Do you know what amazes me? The same people that don't believe in organized religion, they believe in organized football. If they're a fan, they think the whole team ought to show up on game day, not just the quarterback, not just the receivers. They think the linemen and the defensive line ought to show up, too, and the kicker. They think everybody on the team ought to show up to play. Do you know why? Because if they don't, their team doesn't really have a chance to win. I can understand why you'd be worried about something as important as football and why you wouldn't think it was a big deal for us to be in our place for something as trivial as church, right?

Remember, if I don't have order, and everything's scattered in disarray, it's confusion. If I don't assemble like I'm commanded to, then I'm causing confusion. All the pieces are not in place, assembled. In Isaiah 24:10 God said, ***“The city of confusion is broken...”*** Men can relate to this. How many of you have ever tried to get a job done with a broken tool? You spend all day working on the tool and never really get to work on the project. It's frustrating. It's takes all day to fix the tool to do a 15 minute job.

I'm part of the church, so I need to be in my place; if the church is not assembled, it's not functional and usable. God has determined to use the local church to get the job done in this world. If I'm part of that church but not in my place, I've created confusion and dysfunction. I'm forcing God to do His work with a broken tool. He's not going to change His plan because I'm backslidden. There is no problem with God. God can still do what He did at Pentecost. But

remember they were all in one place, in one accord, when the Holy Ghost of God fell. They were filled with the Spirit. They went out in power and saw 3,000 people saved. God is able to do that, but not with a broken tool, not with an unassembled church.

This principle of assembling is not unique to the New Testament church. God has always intended for His people, in any age, to assemble regularly. I don't care if it was the Old Testament Jew or the New Testament Christian. As a matter of fact, no less than 128 times in the Old Testament, God uses the word 'congregation.' In the New Testament no less than 113 times God uses the word 'church,' which means assembling, and in 95 of those God is talking about a local assembling of believers at a specific time and location. Do you know what we have here this morning? We have a local church, an assembling of believers. What I'm trying to get you to understand is that God intended for the Old Testament Jew to gather and assemble like He intends for the New Testament Christian to assemble. In essence, the two words mean the same thing -- to come together around the Word of God. God has a program and plan. When we get out of that program, we mess up God's plan.

By the way, I'm not of the crowd that tries to use Acts 7:38 to say that the New Testament church is a continuation of the 'church in the wilderness,' as if the church started with Abraham or Moses. Jesus started the New Testament church in Matthew 16:18. Was there an assembling in the Old Testament? Yes, and God always intended for His people to assemble, whether it was the Old Testament Jew or the New Testament Christian.

God not only told us that we're supposed to assemble, He also says there are some things becoming of the house of God. In I Timothy 3:15 Paul told Timothy, ***"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*** He said, "There is a certain conduct that is becoming of the house of God."

Do you know what amazes me? People get a job at McDonald's flipping hamburgers and be told, "You have to wear this uniform." Nobody bucks it. If you want a job and a paycheck, you wear their uniform. There's no Bible for that, but it doesn't bother them at all.

Then they come to church and learn the Bible has clear standards of modesty and that cross-dressing is an abomination, so we ask that people in leadership dress accordingly. Even though it came from the Bible, they get mad at the pastor for saying, "I'd love for you to serve in this area of leadership as a teacher or worker, but the Bible requires this standard. I don't have standards; God has standards." Churches need all the help we can get in every ministry, but we can't change God's Word to get more workers. You'll get mad at the preacher and leave the church because of what's right there in the Bible, but you'll go flip hamburgers at McDonalds and wear any uniform they tell you without a single complaint. What are we thinking? This is a holy work, God's work.

Assembling was always a part of God's plan for His people. Numbers 10:3 says, ***"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves"***

to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” “Preacher, that’s the Old Testament Jew.” I know, but the principle of assembling is from cover to cover in the Bible. He said, “When the trumpets are blown,” which would be like saying, “When the announcement is made.” When Moses was leading the children of Israel to the Promised Land, there were several million of them. They didn’t have cell phones, walkie talkies, a PA system. In order to make an announcement, there was a certain trumpet blast that carried a certain message. Check I Corinthians 14:8. ***“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”*** A certain blast of the trumpet told them of an approaching enemy, to prepare for war. A certain trumpet blast told them to stop and make camp, and another told them it’s time to break camp and move on. There was also a trumpet blast that told them it was time to assemble.

This church doesn’t have several million members like the crowd Moses led, but it has some regularly scheduled services on Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night. It also has some announced services like revival meeting and missions conference.

It was Moses’ responsibility to be in touch with God to know when they needed to assemble. He would tell the trumpeter, “Give a trumpet blast. It’s time for the people of God to assemble. He has something to say to us.” He was the master of assembly.

In the New Testament every local church has a master of assembly, the pastor. It’s his responsibility to be in touch with God to know when the church needs to assemble. So He’s saying, “When the trumpets are blown or when the announcement is given, all the assembly...” You understand what ALL means.

Suppose I say, “I want ALL of you on the front row to move to the third row.” If they did what I asked, how many of them would still be seated on the front row? None. All is an inclusive word. When the announcement is made, He wants all of us to respond. All the assembly -- that’s the whole church, shall assemble themselves down at the lake? Right? At the family reunion? In the living room around the Bible? Now you ought to do that regularly, but not in replacement of going to church. You really do need to read your Bible personally, but that cannot replace the matter of assembling with the church as the Bible commands.

He said, ***“...all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.”*** There was a designated meeting place for the Old Testament Jew, and there is a designated meeting place for New Testament Christian. It’s the local church. All the assembly, not part of it, they are to assemble every time the announcement is made. Sometimes you don’t need an announcement. You know we’re having church Wednesday evening, right? We’re having Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night services. Those are scheduled times that you’re aware of. It’s tragic that a lot of saved people do not even attend those scheduled services, much less those that are announced. If you have a missions’ conference everybody needs to attend it. If you have revival, everybody needs to attend it every possible service they can. You don’t pick and choose if you’re part of a church. That’s like saying, “Well, you know the factory is open and working, but I don’t think I want to work today. I think I’ll go to work Wednesday.” Call your boss and say, “I’m going to work one

day this week. I've got too much stuff to do the rest of the week." Do you think that's going to cut it? It doesn't work with God either. He tells us when the announcement is made, **"...all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."**

In Isaiah 45:20 He says, **"Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together,..."** I don't think things are in the Bible in a certain order by accident, do you? The first thing He said is **"Assemble yourselves..."** Then He said, **"...come..."** Then He said, **"...draw near together..."** Let me simplify. The object of this verse is to draw near together, right? That's the last thing He said. Okay, what are the chances that we can draw near together if we're not together? Is there any hope of that coming to pass? How can we draw near together if we're not together?

"What are you getting at, Preacher?" Every church has a nucleus of people that comes to everything -- Sunday school, Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, revivals, you name it. Whatever it is, they are there. They get the full dose. Let me show you how much difference there is. I won't even count revival, just the four main services to simplify the numbers. God intends for us to be a part of everything, but when you come to four services a week, 52 weeks a year, that's 208. This guy that comes to everything he gets 208 sermons.

Then there is somebody, they don't come every time the doors are open. They come Sunday morning and Sunday night, or Sunday night and Wednesday night, or Sunday school and Sunday morning, but they skip the others. You understand the vast difference between these two. This guy that comes to everything, he gets 208 sermons a year. Do you know how many this other person gets? 104. They still come every week, but they only get half as much preaching and teaching.

Then you have somebody else who comes every Sunday morning, 52 weeks a year. They get 52 sermons a year. Then you have somebody else that they may come to 20 or 30 services a year. Could I ask you a question. How in God's name are we going to get these people on the same page? How are we ever going to develop them as a unit, as a body, as a church like God intended? I can't help them draw near together; I can't even get them together.

Do you know what happens after a while? Somebody that comes sporadically, they come in and say, "The church has changed." Well, it's supposed to. New families are being added. The people that have been here are growing in the grace of God. Do you know why the person says that? They feel like they have been left behind. Do you know why they feel like they've been left behind? They have. Nobody has been unkind or shunned them. But some of these faithful folks have grown by leaps and bounds while they were out fooling around doing something else and they didn't get near as much preaching and the teaching and the family atmosphere and they didn't grow. They're scratching their head wondering why these faithful people seem so different than they used to. Why the church has changed? It's supposed to, and you are, too. You're supposed to be growing in the grace of God with them. He said, **"Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together,..."**

Then He said in Isaiah 48:14, **"All ye,..."** I wonder how many that means. All is inclusive and ye means you. He's talking to you and me. **"All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear;..."** Don't

miss this, folks. I hear people say, “Well, I can worship God better down at the lake or out in the woods.” There are two reasons why that’s not true. Remember the verse I quoted a while ago? They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. The truth is the Bible, which commands me not to forsake the assembling. So if I forsake the assembling and go to the lake instead, that’s disobedience. There is no such thing as disobedient worship. That’s the first reason why that’s not true.

But the main purpose for church is not just worship. If the only time you worship God is for an hour on Sunday morning once a week, you are a pathetic excuse for a worshipper. To the child of God all ground is holy ground. Every place is an altar to God. God wants me to worship Him seven days a week, everywhere I go, in everything I do, not just for an hour on Sunday morning.

“Then what’s the purpose of church?” Don’t miss this. Worship is part of church like it’s part of everything else, but it is not the main reason for assembling. God tells us right here what the main reason is. He said, “*...assemble yourselves, and...*” worship? “*...assemble yourselves, and hear;...*” God said, “I have something to say to you. You need to assemble so you can hear it. I’m not going to say it a thousand different places. You’re part of this local church. I’m going to give it to your preacher, and they’re going to say what you need to hear. Be there and get it.”

Now I’m well aware you can hear the words through the radio or CD or live stream, but that doesn’t nullify God’s command to not forsake the assembling. There’s nothing about a tablet or an Ipad that resembles a church or a pulpit. Church is an event. There’s something holy about it, something spiritual, and something eternal about it in the very atmosphere of a church service that can’t be transmitted electronically. In Acts two God’s power fell when they were ALL in one place and in one accord.

How many of you at some time in your life there was a meeting, it could have been at church, at work or at school, where an announcement was made, but you weren’t there? Then the next time you showed up and you did the very thing that they announced not to do at the last meeting. You weren’t in rebellion; you just didn’t hear the message. Do you know what happens then. Your pride rises up. “That’s a dumb rule.” Because you embarrassed yourself, but you didn’t even know the rule existed or the new information.

Do you know what happens to people? The pastor is preaching a series of sermons on a subject. Let’s just say separation. You need to understand how important separation from the world is to Christianity. I’m not talking about isolation. We’re soulwinners. We go after sinners and love them. I’m not talking about thinking I’m better. If I was better, I wouldn’t need to be separated. The preacher is preaching a series of messages on separation. He’s laying the foundation, the doctrinal truths that all this rests upon and teaching why we have separation. What is the issue? Why it’s important and why it’s necessary, and you miss those four lessons.

Then you show up the night he’s preaching on one of the issues of separation, a certain standard. Do you know what you do? You get offended and angry. Why? If you had been there

for the other four lessons, you wouldn't have gotten offended because he laid the foundation for this and you missed all the foundational information, and the only thing you got was the one message that dealt with the issue itself. You don't understand why he's saying that because you weren't here when he taught what this rests upon.

People spend their lives offended at preaching because they miss half of the services and then feel like they're under personal attack when they show up because they finally land on a service where the preacher is preaching or teaching on something that they are in violation of and they don't even understand. They weren't here when it was taught. They missed too much church.

Remember King David? There are two things that were strong statements about him. First Chronicles 28, when David wanted to build the Temple, God told David, "No, you have shed too much blood." David fought God's battles, drove out God's enemies. God wasn't condemning him for that, but what He said was, "David, you have a reputation of being a man of war, a soldier, and I don't want My Temple to be identified with war even though you fought My battles. I want it to be built in times of peace. You prepare for your son, Solomon, and I will let him build the Temple and I'll make him a man of peace. He'll have peace because you fought, but we'll let him build the temple so it's identified with peace instead of war." God wouldn't let David build the Temple because he was a man of war. That was his reputation. ***"...Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."*** That was his reputation.

Acts 13 also tells us David was a man after God's own heart. I don't believe there was a more devoted man on the face of the earth than he was. If you wanted to label it Christianity, he would have been the best Christian alive in his generation. We're talking about a man whose reputation was to be a man of war and God, Himself said that David was a man after His own heart -- the most devoted man in his generation to the person of God.

But in II Samuel 11 the Bible says it was time for kings to go forth to war, and David remained at the palace. After all, folks, David had a reputation of being a man of war. Couldn't he live on his reputation for just one battle? Everybody knew him as a man of war. What would it hurt if he just wasn't where he was supposed to be one time? While David was at home walking on his roof-top the Bible said that he saw a woman bathing. Her name was Bathsheba and she was beautiful to look upon. If David had been where he was supposed to be, he would have never seen Bathsheba. If he had seen a similar sight in the heat of battle, he wouldn't have had time to take a second glance. He would have been protected by the battle, protected by being where he was supposed to be when he was supposed to be there.

You say, "I'm a church goer. What would it hurt if I just missed one service? I go all the time. Couldn't I live on my reputation for one service? What would it hurt if I wasn't where I was supposed to be one time?" Ask David. I don't think you are a better Christian than David was. I don't think you are more devoted to God than David was. If David couldn't handle it, I don't think you and I can either. You cannot afford to forfeit any of the protection that God has supplied you with and some of that protection is just being where I'm supposed to be, when I'm supposed to be there. I'm commanded not to forsake the assembling.

Ezra 9:4 makes this statement. ***“Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel,...”*** Ezra said that everybody that feared God assembled. They still do. Everybody that has a proper reverence for God still assembles every time the doors are open, if I fear God like I’m supposed to. God is not some miserable tyrant, but He is a holy, righteous, just God that is to be revered.

I loved my dad, but I sure didn’t want to get on his wrong side. God is holy and He said, “If you have a proper fear of God, you’d just do right.” We have a very irreverent spirit in this age toward God and His church. Even people that are saved do not have the reverence for a holy God they ought to have. We’re missing something, folks. We have emphasized the love of God to the point that we think He’s a Grandpap that smiles at disobedience and thinks it’s cute. That’s not the nature of a holy God. I never have the favor of God when I’m doing wrong. People that have a fear of God aren’t perfect, but they’d like to be. They’re really trying to be. They don’t feel oppressed by obedience. He said that everyone that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, they all assembled, every single one of them. If I’m not assembling when the doors are open and I can be there, I don’t have a proper reverence for God.

Here they were on a Sunday night, assembled, in John 20. When Jesus came into the midst He said, ***“...Peace be unto you.”*** This is the same Jesus that the Bible said, ***“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*** (John 1:3) Do you know how He created everything? By His Word. Do you understand when Jesus says something, it is done as He said? When He stood on the deck of the ship and said to the storm, ***“...Peace be still...,”*** the waters laid down and became placid. The winds ceased their blowing. The storm stopped raging. The disciples even marveled. ***“...What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”*** (Matthew 8:27) We know He’s great, but good night! They were even amazed. When Jesus says something, it is as He says.

Understand that when He came into that Sunday night service, His followers were in turmoil. Their Saviour had been crucified. They were meeting behind closed doors for fear of the Jews killing them, but two drops of rain will keep some of us home. These guys knew when they came to church that they might be dragged off and crucified, but even when there was legitimate danger, they would not stay home. They still assembled, not just when it was convenient.

Do you know what Jesus did? He came in and said, ***“...Peace be unto you.”*** If Jesus speaks peace into your heart, there is peace. The circumstances may not be peaceful, but when the Lord Jesus speaks peace into my heart I can have peace in the midst of the storm, in circumstances that are not peaceful. Jesus has to do a work in my heart.

People will say, “I’m having trouble and financial reversals. I’ve got health problems. Our family is struggling. I just can’t come to church because we’re having problems.” Do you realize how absurd that is? That’s like saying, “I can’t go to the hospital because I’m sick.” It doesn’t make any sense. If I have problems, Jesus is the great Physician. He can supply any need I have, heal any sickness. He can speak and change all the circumstances, or He can give me peace in my heart in the midst of those circumstances.

Acts 11:26 says, ***“...a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”*** It didn’t say they called themselves Christians. They were called Christians by those who observed their manner of life. You understand that’s prefaced by the statement, ***“...a whole year they assembled...”*** A whole year is 12 months. A whole year is 52 weeks. A whole year is 365 days. If you are familiar with the habit of the early church, they didn’t just have church three times a week. Acts 5:42 says, ***“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”*** They went to church every day!

There are people in this room that have been saved for 20 years, that have never assembled a whole year without missing a service they could have attended. I’m not talking about when they were sick. There are people that have been saved 10 years, 20 years, 30 years, but in all that time you have never assembled a whole year because a whole year means you don’t take any part of it off. Every time the doors are open, you are there.

Do you know what assembling for a whole year did to these people? It made Christians out of them. It made them Christ-like. It said that they were called Christians. They didn’t say, “We are Christians.” Those who watched them said, “You know, they act like Jesus. They act like Christ. They’re copies of the original.” A copy is never as good as the original, but it should resemble the original. You should be able to tell what it’s a copy of. There should be a resemblance. They assembled a whole year and they had a testimony in society that they were Christians.

In Matthew 5 He tells us, ***“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”*** (Matthew 5:14-15) You don’t light it and then put it under a bushel. What point is there in lighting it if you’re going to hide the light? That’s where the song comes from, “This little light of mine; I’m going to let it shine.”

You have to put the light on a lampstand for it to be visible. Did you ever check Revelation 1:20 and find out what the seven lampstands are, the seven candlesticks in the book of Revelation? The seven churches. You say, “What does it mean for me to put my light on a candlestick? But if that testimony is going to radiate and I’m going to be seen in this society as a Christian, do you know what I have to do? I have to put my candle on the lampstand, the local church. Because the lampstands are the local churches. I’ll never have the testimony I’m supposed to have and the impact on those around me in my city, my community, if I won’t put my candle, my life on the lampstand so the light can radiate.

God said that we’re not to forsake the assembling, the completion of the collection, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more. God wants to use the church, and you are a member of it. “But Preacher, you don’t understand. I’m not the pastor or evangelist. I’m not an usher or teacher. I don’t sing in the choir. It doesn’t matter if I don’t show up.” Well, my first question is, “Why not?” If you’re saved, you’re part of the body of Christ. If you’re a member of this church, you’re part of this local assembly.

Can you see my heart right now? I'm talking about the organ that pumps blood. Can you see that? It's covered, hidden. It must not be important since you can't see it, right? If I show up this morning and my heart doesn't, how am I doing? I'm dead. I don't care if you hold an office, if you have a platform position or not. If you're a member of this local church, it is vital to this church's health and growth and the blessing of God that you not forsake the assembling. It's not only vital to you personally and your needs, but it is vital to this local church whether you're visible or never publicly seen, that you be in your place. Every member of the body is vital and important. When you don't show up, you've hurt the whole body.

You're important to this church. I don't care who you are. If you're a born again child of God and a member of this church, you are important to this church and you need to be in your place for every service. We are not to forsake ***"...the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."*** If you're not a member of a local church like this, you need to put roots down like God intended. He said, ***"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."*** (Ephesians 3:21)

The Bible tells us that Jesus died for the individual sinner, but says in Ephesians that Christ died for the church. Put God in the preeminent place in your life. Church in your life becomes even more vital and important as we see the day approaching.

I recently saw a clip of a black preacher who said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Governor. I've been on you for saying that the church is non-essential, but I realized that you didn't make the church non-essential. WE made the church non-essential. We are the ones who decided that church wasn't all that important." Are we guilty?

A lot of people are at a standstill spiritually. Hopefully you haven't gone backwards during these weeks. We need to get back to church folks. We are going to wither and die if we don't get back in our place in church. Faithful, serving, obedient. If you think this is the last time there will ever be a crisis or a virus, you better think again. We've never shut churches down for a virus in the past and we don't need to in the present. We are smart enough to make decisions for ourselves without the government telling me when I'm allowed to breathe in and breathe out and if I'm allowed to attend church. There's a God in Heaven who promises to take care of His people. Our safety is in the Lord. ***"...for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety."*** (Psalm 4:8)

Church attendance is not an 'also, if you have time' option. It's a need, a necessity. ***"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."***