

The Event Matters

How going to Church
helps us *BE* the Church



Image: Jason Rogers | Flickr

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*For almost 2,000 years, Christians haven't just been the church,
we've gathered for the event of church.
Because the event matters.*

Church is not a place we go, it's who we are. The New Testament is really clear about that.

But because church is who we are, it also matters a great deal that we go to church, too.

Church attendance should not be the defining feature of our Christian lives. After all, God doesn't take attendance. But that doesn't mean going to church doesn't matter. It does. A lot.

Unfortunately, there's a growing movement of people who say they can be better Christians without going to church. They're using the theology of *being* the church as an excuse for not *going* to church. That is misguided at best and disobedient at worst.

It's dangerous to discount the value of church-going. And it's unsupportable by scripture, which makes it clear that gathering with other believers is an essential aspect of faith. For instance, you can't take communion alone – the word “communion” itself tells us that.

Your church-going experience may look nothing like mine. That's okay. I'm not arguing for any particular format. But it matters that we go. It's important – even essential – that we gather.

The Church Event Matters

For almost 2,000 years, Christians haven't just *been* the church, we've gathered for the *event* of church. Because the event matters.

There's something important about leaving our houses to gather with other believers – even if it's to meet in another believer's house. It tells us that being the church matters, because things that matter get a spot on our schedules. They carve time out of our week. They cost us something to do.

The event of church-going gives weight to the reality of church-being.

Church-Going as a Shared Experience

Have you ever wondered why people line up for a midnight showing of a new movie? Or brave the elements to sit in cold stands to watch a football game?

It's not because there's no other way to see the movie or watch the game. In fact, it can be argued (by me, for one) that the TV experience is better than the live game experience in many ways. And for the movie, it's not like fans will never have another chance to see it. It will be in theaters for months, then on DVD, streaming services and more after that. Forever.

If it was only about the content of the movie or the game, no one would ever leave their house to watch one ever again.

They leave their house to go to the movie and the game because the event matters. Sharing the experience in the same space as other people who share that interest – even with total strangers – matters. It makes the content better, somehow. More real.

It's the same with church attendance. Sharing the same space with others who also love Jesus and each other gives a sense of importance, excitement and reality to everything else about our faith. Going to church reminds us that being the church matters.

At least that's what a good church experience *should* do.

Going and Being

So why is church attendance down, even among believers? Is it because we've elevated going to church over being the church? Or is it because we think we can be the church without going to church?

Both/and.

When church leaders emphasize going to church over being the church, people start thinking attendance is enough and they *stop* being the church.

On the other hand, when we tell people it's only about *being* the church, they stop *going*. And soon they stop being, too.

It's a vicious circle.

We need both. Going to church strengthens being the church and being the church is made stronger by going to church.

I need to worship in the same space as you to ground my faith in the reality of my everyday life. And you need to worship in the same space as me for the same reason.

Going to church doesn't matter if we're not being the church, and being the church stops happening when we stop going.

We need the church. Not because we need an institution. But because we've been made to worship Jesus together.

I am a part of the church, so I go to church. And I go to church because we are the church.

We're better together.



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