

5 Benefits To Being An Active Church Member Pleasant Plains 4-30-2017AM NICK ANGEL

- ***READ Acts 2:42-47/PRAYER*** There is a grow number of individuals who are of the mindset that an individual personal relationship with Christ is all that is necessary for them to be what God want them to be. They would be very quick to point out that they have no need to be a part of a local church and that they can be a Christian just the same as anyone else while doing it solo. In fact, one writer, John Pavlovitz, goes so far as saying that each individual is the church in and of themselves...thus they have no need to go and assemble with others. (<http://johnpavlovitz.com/2016/09/04/relax-christian-you-dont-have-to-go-to-church/>)
- If I'm being frank with you, I think that is absolute nonsense. An honest person cannot read what we just read in **Acts 2:42-47** and come away thinking that God ever intended for those who call themselves Christians to live out their faiths by themselves and away from others who are intending to do the same. Can we also throw **Hebrews 10:23-25** into this discussion? Again, I don't see how any person could honestly read this text and think that they are without need of the church and gathering with the saints.
- I never really made this connection before, but I think that **Acts 2:42-47** & **Hebrews 10:23-25** have a great deal in common. I think that Luke is illustrating the principle that is being put forth by the Hebrew writer. The Hebrew writer implores that each disciple not forsake the times when the saints gather together. I think we often put this in the context of the assembly, as in what we are in right now. But can I suggest to you that we might do well to expand our understanding of this and come to see this as not just the assembly, but any of the times when Christians gather together.
- I think that the Hebrew writer is encouraging Christians to be active church members. Now, what do I mean by active church members? Well, I'm not talking about someone who is just a member in the sense that they are in the church's directory. I'm also not talking about someone who is occasionally in attendance at a church's assemblies. I'm also not talking about a person who gives money to the church at the time of offering. There are some who would say that these things would make someone an active church member in the sense of what the Hebrew writer is saying.
- However, might I suggest to you that active church members are more than "official" members in the directory. They're more than people who attending regularly. They're more than people who support the work monetarily. In reality, I'm suggesting that active church members are people who are engaged and contributing to the work of the church in a variety of ways. Whether it is leading worship, teaching class, participating in class, supporting events, hosting other Christians, being with others Christians, etc...these people are truly active church members. They are people who when saints are gathering, they are there. Whether it be the assembly, an outside study, a meal, or even just spending some time with your brother or sisters...these times emulate the way in which the early church functioned.
- So why does this matter? It matters because there are a lot of people who feel like they're not getting anything out of the church, and if people don't feel as if they are getting things out of something then they're going to drop it like a hot potato. But can I suggest to you that the old adage probably needs to be said..."you get out what you put in." I'm willing to say that many of those same people would not be considered active church members. Instead, they are the occasional attending directory members who give some money. They aren't really putting anything in as active members, and because of that they don't like the church because they don't think it offers them anything. I'm convinced that active church members like those early Christians benefit in ways that others just don't, and I would like to finish up by talking about five ways in which they benefit.

I. Stronger Relationships

- A. It shouldn't be surprising that spending more time with those who share with us something as important as faith in Jesus would create strong relationships. It strengthens the fellowship that we have between ourselves that is a result of walking in the light with Jesus. (**I John 1**)
- B. This past Wednesday, we considered the better ways that are written in **Ecclesiastes 4**, and one of those better ways is that two is better than one, and how true it is! (**Eccl. 4:9-12**)
- C. To have someone with you that you are in agreement with, someone who helps you work, someone who helps you when you fall, someone who provides warmth of friendship, and someone who helps you stand against struggles...How can this but strengthen a relationships?
- D. Again, the solo Christian doesn't get this...but the active church member sure does.
- E. Can I also suggest that while it is good and needed to have good relationships with all...it is also ok and probably good that we have at least a couple of fellow disciples who we are closest with. Some might disagree with that, but I think Jesus having Peter, James, and John as those He was closest with shows that it is natural to be closer to some than others.

II. Stronger Accountability

- A. Those stronger relationships also benefit when it comes to being accountable in our faiths. When we are single Christians living on our own or disengaged Christians who don't have strong relationships then who is there to hold us accountable?
- B. Who is there to strive to restore us in gentleness when we struggle? (**Gal. 6:1**) If we are by ourselves then we don't have that. If we are church members in name only then how will others be able to hold us to God's higher standard of godliness? I'll suggest that they can't.
- C. If you really want to see this concept in action, then consider the occasion when Paul had to call out Peter for his hypocrisy in regards to eating with the Gentiles. (**Gal. 2:11**) Do you really think that just anyone could have done that effectively? I just don't see that happening with just anyone, but I think that Paul was effective in doing so because he and Peter had a strong relationship and bond as Apostles of Jesus.
- D. Also remember that Peter mentions Paul by name in his letters. I am convinced that these men were well aware of each other and had a relationship that allowed them to hold each other accountable to God's high standard. The solo Christian or passive church member doesn't have such a thing.

III. Better Prepared To Aid

- A. The relationships not only allow us to hold each other accountable, but they also help active church members to be better prepared to offer aid when we see a brother or sister in need. Our constant time together with them helps us to recognize when things change.
- B. It might be that we see them being tempted at some point in their lives. When we see them struggling, we are there to pull them out of the fire quickly before disaster sets in. (**Jude 1:22,23**)
- C. Or it could be that they are in need of some sort of physical aid. Did you notice this was a big part of the early church back in **Acts 2:42-47**. No one was in any true need because the disciples were quick to jump to aid those who had need.
- D. If we are not active and engaged with those who make up our local church, then how can we know when they have need or how can they know when I have a need? Active church members benefit from spending much time together.

IV. Stronger Faith

- A. The three things we have already listed naturally contribute to this benefit in our lives as active church members. When we are engaged and contributing to the health and prosperity of the church, then our faiths will naturally grow and become stronger.
- B. Consider again what is said in **Hebrews 10:23-25**, when we assemble together...when we spend time together as brothers and sisters we do so with the goal of stimulating or string one another to love and good deeds. We are trying to influence each other to be better and stronger disciples.
- C. If bad company corrupts (**I Cor. 15:33**), then can I suggest that good, godly company does the exact opposite? Certainly, we would have to admit this truth! Those who are active church members benefit by having stronger faiths than those who try to do it on their own.

V. Church Becomes Something You're A Part Of And Not Just Something You Do

- A. Going back to why so many people think that they don't need the church...it might also be because they see the church as just something that they do. I go to "church." When people ask what we are doing on Sunday we might respond with "church." Now, I try not to be one who wrangles over words...so I get what people mean when they say that, but might it be a symptom of an underlying problem that people don't see the church as something they are actually a part of?
- B. New Testament writers always speak of the church as a noun and not a verb. It isn't something you do, but it is something you're a part of. It is the Body of Christ (**I Cor. 12:27**), it is the Way (**Acts 9:1,2**), It is the church of Christ, etc.
- C. Those who are active church members are active members of the body of Christ, the Way, etc. They are a part of something that was a part of God's mind from the very beginning and that ought to provide us with encouragement and confidence far beyond what we could ever have on our own. Certainly, we ought to see the better way that is the way of the active church member.

The saying is so true..."you get out what you put in." Too many people want to rant and rail against organized local churches because they say that they aren't doing anything for them, but the truth is often that *they* are not doing anything for them either. The truth is that the greatest benefits of the Lord's disciples are found when they are actively engaged and contributing to the work of the church by being active parts of it. When the saints gather, then active church members are there. They are there because they have made assembling with the saints a high priority, and it is such because they know the good that comes from doing so. May God help us all to put forth the efforts to be actively church members so that others may benefit right along with as those who are engaged and contributing to one another and the Lord's Kingdom.