



# The Good News

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## “Do I HAVE to go to church??”

By Michael McCleary

Have you ever woken up on a Sunday morning and just really did not want to go to church? Have you ever made up an excuse about not feeling well, and convinced yourself it would be better for you to stay home? Perhaps we justified it by convincing ourselves of a lie, and whatever it was we wanted or needed to do, (sleeping in, watching TV, or any other reason that does not justify missing service), became more important than worshipping God with the saints.

Maybe we are young people or adults that are just so tired with work and/or school that service is just too hard to get to on Sunday morning or Sunday night. Maybe we are older and have convinced ourselves that we gave so many years to God that we are owed some time off, staying home on Wednesday nights because, after all, Wednesday night services aren't as important as Sunday services, right?

What kind of attitude does God want from us in our service to Him? We can read in Romans 12:11 that we are to “Not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” What is the idea conveyed with being “fervent in spirit”? Is it the attitude that “I will do enough to get by”? Or is it the attitude that involves an intense desire to do whatever the Lord asks? It should be the latter, being hot, boiling, *fervent* in spirit, and it is the attitude that we must have to be pleasing to Him.

When we skip bible class on Sunday morning, and we come for worship service only, what are we saying to our God? Does God think that, since we had more important things to do, that it is “ok” to skip the study of His word in favor of what we want? Have we considered that it is a command to be at every worship service and Bible study? Heb. 10: 24 commands, “Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works”. The Hebrew writer commands us to “consider one another”. For what pur-

pose? To “stir up love and good works”. The stirring was to be accomplished by assembling, not forsaking (v.25). Notice how the Hebrew writer also mentions that forsaking the assembling of the saints was the way of some. The broader context shows that this is in reference to Christians who were turning their back on God, but we see that the principle of forsaking worship or bible study or a Gospel meeting in favor of something else is nothing new. It has been occurring for 2,000 years!

When we consider the services that occur in this building, among the members of God's church, do we think of them in terms of “What will I get out of this? How will this benefit me?” Brethren, this worship service is not about us, it is about God. And as we worship God, praise God, pray to God, study God's word, we also exhort and encourage those around us, our brothers and our sisters, our neighbors, and friends, out of love from a pure heart helping each other get to Heaven. It is not a matter for which we can rationalize reasons for missing services. Granted, there are circumstances in which we may not be able to make it to services or Bible studies, such as sickness, or some other unavoidable circumstance. But God is aware when we are truly just making excuses to get out of going to church. Don't think for a second that God is fooled. We can fool our families, our preachers, our brethren, and ourselves, but not God...and God will be the one to whom we will have to give an answer.

Brethren, let us consider the type of service that God wants from us, “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), realizing that “doing enough to get by” is not enough to get us to Heaven, but it is plenty to get us to hell.