

Series: *You Should Be Committed*
Sermon: "Church My Way" 2 Timothy 3:1-5
October 9, 2016
Pastor Jon Haakana

VIDEO (Shoppers) – You thought they were talking about church, didn't you? Well, they kinda were weren't they? Living in a consumer driven culture, going to church becomes church shopping, and whether or not we continue to go to church is often based on having church our way or not. This year we are resetting and renewing our hearts and lives. One great way to reset or recharge our faith is by spending time with God in worship.

A husband and his wife arose one Sunday morning and the wife dressed for church. It was just about time for the service when she noticed her husband hadn't moved a finger toward getting dressed. Perplexed, she asked, "Why aren't you getting dressed for church?" He said, "Cause I don't want to go. She asked, "Do you have any reasons?" He said, "Yes, I have three good reasons. First, the congregation is cold. Second, no one there likes me. And third, I just don't want to go. The wife replied, wisely, "Well, honey, I have three reasons why you should go. First, the congregation is warm. Second, there are a few people there who do like you. And third, you're the pastor! So get dressed!"

While this is a humorous story--and one that is not true of this pastor--many people that claim to be Christians do not attend church. The most common comment that I hear is "You don't have to go to church to be saved" or "You don't have to go to church to get to heaven". Frankly, as a pastor, I am getting really tired of hearing that. I hear all sorts of reasons why people don't go to church, and frankly most of them come down to a statement that is true of all of them: "I want God MY Way". I think that in the majority of the cases is that the people that do not assemble together on Sunday mornings want a manageable God, one that fits into their lifestyle.

This being said, I feel that the real reason why people are not faithful on Sunday is because of their level of faithfulness during the week, month and year. Our faith is so much more than just Sunday morning and that is the problem. Quite honestly, I think that the problem of the church today is that we are driven to distraction. Yes, we are driven to distraction by those things that are not worth a thing in eternity. Let's study where the problem lies this week.

Read again 2 Timothy 3:1-5

So, we should not be surprised that people are finding ways to justify not being in church. It is one of those signs of the times. People that have once confessed Christ as their Savior are lovers of self and of so many other things. After all, the Bible does tell us that before the end times, there will be a great apostasy, a great "falling away." 2 Tim – quite a laundry list - sin

This falling away doesn't happen overnight, it happens subtly yet steadily when we find reasons not to spend time with God. Today I want to share with you the top ten reasons why some people who call themselves "Christians" don't attend church – Now I know that for the most part I am preaching to the choir today, but it is good for all of us to review our priorities spiritually...

Here are the top ten excuses which are from a survey done by LifeWay Research:

Excuse # 1 - Simply got too busy - 19 %

Work long hours – need some rest – attitude of gratitude for gainful employment from the Giver of all

Sickness, work on Sundays, crisis/death in family – even these can become excuses

Excuse # 2 - Family/home responsibilities prevented attendance - 17 %

Only so much time – family must be priority – involvement in sports activities
And Pastor, mowing – shoveling – home repair doesn't take of itself

Excuse # 3 - Church members seemed hypocritical - 17 %

As Christians we must not only talk the talk but walk the walk. If we come to church on Sunday morning and act all nice and pious, then swear like a sailor and act like a selfish idiot the rest of the week, we are being hypocritical. If you think about it, we are all hypocritical to some degree. We all talk about how we should do this or that while standing behind the pulpit or sitting in the pew, but when we cross over the threshold of the church door, are we leaving that testimony behind?

Excuse # 4 - Church members were judgmental of others - 17 %

Seeing a speck in someone's eye, but not seeing the log in our own...(Gospel lesson)
Are we setting expectations so high that they become stumbling blocks?

We must be careful of looking down our nose and pointing "Sinner!" to those that fall. I know I fall at times, and am quite embarrassed about it. When we do need to correct someone, it must be done in love and almost never in front of other people, it needs to be private.

Excuse # 5 - Moved too far from church - 17 %

In regards to moving too far from the church, that answer is pretty simple--find a church closer to your new home! Makes sense to me. Elders and staff working on the membership list...

Excuse # 6 - Work situation prevented church attendance - 15 %

This is a real concern for some. Having gainful employment means you work when your employer wants you to work. Look for alternative services, Bible studies...Ask employer...

Excuse # 7 - Church was not helping me develop spiritually - 14 %

Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation--if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3 (ESV)

Our #1 priority should be discipling our new converts. It is the responsibility of the church to seek out those that are lost to present the gospel to them, but it is equally important for the church to grow them up in the faith.

Excuse # 8 - Stopped believing in organized religion - 14 %

People don't want organized religion, but they would have a fit if other things weren't organized. What if you went to a "disorganized hospital" for heart surgery? Also, would you want to put money in a "disorganized bank"? The problem is a far more basic one that is just fooling one's self. Sin directs blame from self to others or onto the church

Excuse # 9 - Church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement - 12 %

Cliques in churches are a painful reality in churches. It's important to recognize, however, that there are cliques and there are groups; they are entirely different things. Cliques are often comprised of those that are power hungry, or those that gossip about others that they may feel are beneath them either in the amount of money they make, the clothes they wear, the cultural or community background they come from, and more...

However, it is natural for people in churches to gravitate toward people with backgrounds, jobs, family situations and education levels that are similar to them. That being said, we must be sensitive toward visitors at our church so that they always feel more than welcome.

Excuse # 10 - Got divorced/separated - 10 %

The last excuse on the list is troublesome. We need to be there for people when they go through divorce and separation. It is perhaps the hardest time that a person goes through, other

than the death of a spouse. We need to be willing to extend a loving hand to this group--or any people--in a time of trouble. We need to show them that we love them.

Bottom line here – people need God. We need God. We need to be in the presence of God. God loves us so much, and He wants nothing more than to give us His love, forgiveness...

(Gospel application)

Next week, we will examine the benefits of being in church. These are benefits that the person will experience, but also the local church will experience as well. In short, give this some thought: since God gifted you with gifts and talents to be used for Him and for the enjoyment and use of others, is it not a sin to withhold and misuse that gift? The parable of the man who buried the sum of gold that was entrusted to him by his master comes to mind.

However, there is an overarching concept that we will address in the third message in this short mini-series. The worship service should be the culmination of the week for the believer, one marked by prayer, study and private worship. I believe that for the most part those that do not attend Sunday worship service are also not studying their Bibles, praying or offering private worship to God. The end result is minimizing worship of God on the Lord's Day, and all the excuses that entails.

Please pray with me...