

What Can Keep People from Church

Bill Brinkworth

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” Ephesians 6:11

Daily the Christian must prepare himself to ward off the wiles, or tricks, the devil has for him. Satan’s stratagem is to do all he can to keep us from obeying God. One area he encourages us to be disobedient in is church attendance. However, we cannot blame all our disobedience on him. Our pride, laziness, and sin can also stop us from faithful attendance.

Some of the popular excuses in keeping many from faithfully attending church are:

Church “hopping”: Church attendance is a must for Christian growth. God has raised up a pastor of a local church to minister to your needs. When you miss church, you miss what God had for you that day. When you are a church member and go to this church today and another one next week, your “hopping” around keeps you from attending the church God has for you.

Discontentment: If God originally pointed you to that church to join and attend, you need to stay there until He tells you to move!

Hurt feelings: There is no perfect church! People will accidentally or purposely say the wrong things. Everyone gets their feelings hurt sometimes. The question should be, “Did God call

me here?” If He did, hurt feelings are not a reason to leave a church.

Sin: When people are purposely sinning against God, they most often do not want to be reminded of it. Where will they be reminded of it? In church. That is often why they will not attend.

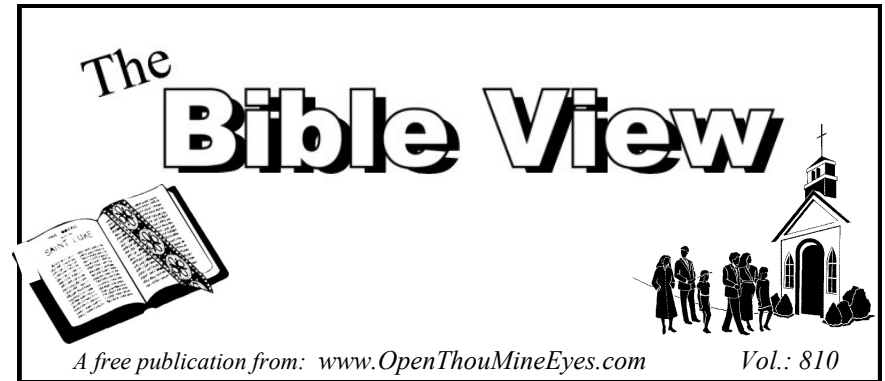
Conviction: When the Holy Spirit urges people to halt their sin, instead of obeying His “voice,” they avoid it by keeping out of church.

Lack of understanding of the things of God. Since they do not read their Bible and do not know what it teaches, when they hear hard, convicting preaching from the Bible, they stay far away from it. Ignorance of the Word of God keeps many from attending a strong, Bible-believing church.

Legitimate reasons, such as sickness, vacations, or work. Sometimes good excuses keep people from attending church for a week or so. That is understandable and happens. Breaking a routine of consistent church attendance is a subtle way of stopping faithful attendance.

Pride: “No one shook my hand,” “They are such an unfriendly church,” or “No one is going to tell me what to do.” These thoughts and others reflect that the sin of pride is involved. *“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



Every Church Has Them

Bill Brinkworth

Every church has its good and bad members. The church that John was writing to in III John had several of both categories, I am sure. However, the apostle wrote of three members in his letter.

Two of the members were good representations of what a Christian should be. Gaius was the “well-beloved” (III John:1). He was most likely a friendly person who many loved. Many reports from the church told John how Gaius was a blessing to the church family (III John:3, 6) and how the man attended to the needs of other Christians (III John:5). It was evident by his concern for the brethren that he truly loved the members of his church.

Another blessing in the church was Demetrius. John also



heard good things said about him (III John:12). These two were an encouragement to the apostle’s heart. It is always good and encouraging to hear how people get saved, get their hearts and lived changed by the Holy Spirit’s work, and do much for the cause of Christ and the people of God.

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The Church of His Own Opinion

Bill Brinkworth

“Well, I need to get up. It is Sunday. I need to go to church,” he thought, as he rubbed his eyes. He struggled to make the first move of the day out of bed.

“But then again, why do I have to go? God is everywhere. So why can’t I worship Him here or on the lake? I know, I can take the boat and go fishing. It will be okay with God. I’ll just talk to Him out in the boat and admire all He has made.”

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Every Church Has Them

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People like those two encourage others by their proof of love for the family of God. They are sometimes part of the reason many stay faithful in church. However, even if we are saved, we still have sinful flesh to contend with, and there will often be “stinkers” in every church. In this church, there was one like that. His name was Diotrephes.

Diotrephes had a terrible testimony in the eyes of others. Instead of showing the spirit of meekness the other two good members showed, this man exhibited improper Christian behavior. He was known for always wanting recognition (III John:9).

I can imagine Diotrephes was one of those that always had something to say. He was the one that got much of the attention and the glory. He refused to accept John the Apostle and any missionaries John sent to the church (III John:10). This discontented man did all he could to talk poorly of John and his work. Diotrephes even had people kicked out of the church that showed charity to anyone Paul sent to the ministry.

This type of man ruins the testimony of any ministry. When man tries to get the glory, which Diotrephes was attempting to receive, the Holy Spirit is

grieved. The work for Christ in a ministry can come to a screeching halt. That is one reason many once-thriving churches are now spiritually dead and doing little for the cause of Christ. Men like this man, unfortunately, often become an excuse for many leaving a church.

In every ministry, there are two types. The good workers are the light in this dark world. They make the church a Christian family. The evil (III John:11) should be ignored and not be the reason anyone leaves a church. If one quits because of a “Diotrephes,” one can be assured that the Holy Spirit is not involved in the decision. If you have one or more of “Diotrephes” in your church, do not leave. Get your eyes and ears off them, and keep them on the Saviour. He will never let you down, and He is the reason you should attend anyway!

The Church of His...

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The convicting voice of the Holy Spirit whispered, “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...*” (Heb.

“You are not too bad to go to church. You are not too good to stay out!” — Author Unknown

10:25a).

That fleeting remembrance of the verse soon left as the half-slumbering sluggard drifted in and out of sleep. Minutes later, he awoke and continued his thoughts. “Besides, the preacher is not always right anyway. He thinks the Bible is the only source of knowing God’s way. It’s just a book and probably has a lot of mistakes. Besides, I’m a good person, and I think I know what is right. You don’t have to go to church every time. I don’t think God wants me to stay away from everything bad. I know He wants me to have fun sometimes.”

Again the soft voice of the Holy Spirit put in the contemplator’s mind a verse that was preached the last time he was in church, “*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*” (Isaiah 40:8)

The fleeting reminder of the verse did nothing to change the opinion of the dozing man. Another thought was chased around by the man’s logic. “Yeah, I’m a good person. I don’t need the preaching and Bible reading like those other folks. I do a lot of good things, and God knows about them. As long I’m not as bad as the others, I’m sure it’s okay with God.”

The Holy Spirit wanted to shout, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Rom. 3:23), but He did not think the man would listen. He decided He would try

one more time to speak to the hardening heart, “... There is none righteous, no, not one:” (Rom. 3:10b).

The verse was received in the half-slumbering mind, but it, too, was ignored. “Well, if I don’t go to church, I can save some money by not putting it in the offering plate. Besides, the preacher just wants my money. That church has got more than enough.”

The Holy Spirit thought of the verse about how not tithing is robbing from God (Malachi 3:8-10). Still, He reasoned, “Why should I tell him. He’s ignored everything I tried to tell him. He will just rationalize it somehow. Probably the old excuse, ‘Well, that’s just an Old Testament verse and not for today.’ He has decided to do what he wants and will not obey anyway.” The Holy Spirit spoke to the man no more.

Ten more minutes of dozing continued until finally, the man got out of bed. He already had formulated his plans for the day. He would walk the dog, get breakfast, and hook up the boat and head out to the lake.

One more local Church of My Own Opinion had just let out, but there would be millions of them meeting all over the world. It was the most popular denomination. As with most of the meetings, the Holy Spirit’s voice was not wanted to be heard, so He was likewise silent in most of their services. He was very grieved (Eph. 4:30).