



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

TOGETHER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 10:19-25 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Matthew 16:13, 15-16, 18; 22:37-39; 28:18-20
1 Corinthians 12:7, 27 | 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:1-4 | James 5:16

► SUMMARY

Many Christians think being involved in church isn't necessary.

Quite often, believers express the opinion that commitment to a local body isn't required for a strong relationship with God. They argue that fellowships are far from perfect: Churches have conflict with other churches, people in the same congregation don't always get along, and some Christians are hypocritical. I understand all of these complaints.

But as followers of Christ, we shouldn't base our actions on merely an assessment of the facts; we must follow the counsel of Scripture. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, *not forsaking our own assembling together*, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another" (emphasis added). It's true that some people can't attend church due to physical limitations, and others have no Bible-believing congregations in their area. But aside from those exceptions, everyone who wants to maintain a vital, growing relationship with Jesus Christ needs to be involved in a local body of believers.

► SERMON POINTS

Who created the concept of church?

Scripture clearly teaches that the church was established by our Savior Himself. In Matthew 16, Jesus asked His disciples who they said He was. Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates

of Hades will not overpower it" (v. 17). The "rock" Jesus referred to is the statement of faith Peter made: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In other words, He's the Savior of the world, humanity's only hope. This is the foundation upon which Jesus established the church, and no evil force can prevail against it.

Throughout history, all kinds of movements have come and gone. In contrast, the church—also called the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27)—has flourished for centuries, and in our time, is growing quickly all over the world. Why has the church survived when so many other institutions have failed? Because it belongs to God, not to men and women. Jesus is the Originator and Sustainer of the church. Today, He ministers to believers and unbelievers through His body.

When Christians claim they don't need church, what does that imply?

If we can walk closely with God without the fellowship of other believers, then assembling on Sunday morning is a waste of time. People who believe this say that we don't need other Christians for support, encouragement, or prayer. One of the main problems with this perspective is what it implies. If believers can maintain an intimate relationship with God apart from church involvement, then Jesus made a big mistake. Of course, our Lord didn't make a mistake when He established His church. You and I need other believers in our lives, people whom God commands that we love as ourselves—a mandate second only to loving Him wholeheartedly (Matt. 22:37-39). The Christian life is all about relationships—with the Lord and other people. It is in the context of community that we exercise our spiritual

gifts, find encouragement to follow God's will, and learn how to properly interpret Scripture. Our Father desires for us to be involved in a local fellowship.

If you aren't currently committed to a church, I pray that you will find a body of believers with whom you can relate—Christians who believe as you do and teach the truth of God's Word.

Why should believers assemble together as a church?

- **To worship.** When we gather for church, we usually praise God in song, giving Him thanks for the good things He's done. Worshipping Him lifts our spirits and strengthens our souls. Many of the songs are full of theological truths that educate us about the blessings we have in Him.
- **To learn the Word of God.** In church, we often have the opportunity to learn from those with special biblical training or deep spiritual maturity. Be ready to check any teaching against the whole counsel of Scripture. Pulling verses out of context can lead to doctrinal errors. We are living in a time when many people don't want to listen to sound doctrine; they prefer to have "their ears tickled"—that is, to hear only what sounds good to them (2 Tim. 4:3).
- **To fulfill the Great Commission.** Most of us aren't able to move across the world, learn a new language and culture, and try to reach the local people with the gospel. But as the body of Christ, we send missionaries to far-off places. We support them through our prayers, letters or emails, and financial support. Together, we can fulfill the command to take the good news to the nations (Matt. 28:18-20).
- **To protect themselves.** When someone stops attending church, it is almost inevitable that he or she will begin to drift away from God. Hearing scriptural truth each week helps hold believers accountable to high moral, ethical, and spiritual standards. Otherwise, the world's messages, which constantly

bombard our minds, tend to distract us from the voice of God.

- **To exercise spiritual gifts.** Our supernatural blessings such as administration, prophecy, and mercy are to be used "for the common good" in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7). For example, my gift is a mixture of exhortation and prophecy. Unless I shared that with other people, it would be wasted.
- **To develop an atmosphere of support.** The New Testament is full of advice concerning how we relate to others. As believers, we are told to love, forgive, accept, encourage, and serve one another. Also, we should be patient and always seek to comfort, inspire, and fellowship with other Christians. And lastly, Scripture calls on us to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16). It is through working together that believers are able to accomplish God's will. No pastor is able to reach everyone.
- **To strengthen and broaden the Christian impact on the world.** When believers are committed to a local fellowship, the influence of that church is greatly multiplied. Together, we can raise funds for both local ministry and world missions and develop effective ways to reach our communities. God works powerfully through churches where each person believes he or she is making a valuable contribution to the work of the ministry. In His eyes, all believers are equally important and loved.

► RESPONSE

- God's purposes for you can be fulfilled only if you are committed to a local body of believers. There, you can receive solid instruction in the Word of God, participate in corporate worship, and find opportunities to exercise your spiritual gifts. Look for a church that believes the Bible and seeks to consistently follow its teachings. Don't just attend regularly; find a way to get involved. Your life will never be the same.

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