

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 9 JUNE 2019



*There is much wisdom here from a godly mum, and even if it doesn't apply to you directly, perhaps it will be helpful encouragement for a relative or friend. Pass it on.*

## 5 Reasons to Keep Going to Church with Baby Brain

*Susan Rockwell*

If you have young kids, I know one thing about you. You're tired. Chances are you haven't slept well in months, possibly years, and the thought of going to church can seem tiring, daunting, a bridge too far. And on those Sundays when you do drag your exhausted family along, the kids don't settle in, you don't really hear the sermon, and it all seems so hard. So every Sunday morning, you wake with a knot in your stomach. Should we stay or go? And the danger is, you won't go.

It makes me teary to think of struggling parents who stop going to church because it is all too hard. The need to push through exhaustion and prioritize church is vital, not only for you, but also for your children.

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I understand. Believe me, I understand! I've been attending church in a sleep-deprived state for more than a decade. My youngest, who is now 4, has hardly slept through the night in his whole life. I have children who have separation anxiety and won't be left in the children's church program. I can't remember the time I last heard a sermon from beginning to end. The struggle is real for me every week. The thought of staying home enters my head every Sunday morning because I am tired – oh, so tired – and that is easier.

Yes, I've been a minister's wife, and yes I'm now a missionary, but there are plenty of times I would've rather stayed in my pyjamas and eaten pancakes! And yet, I know just how important it is for all of us to go.

Here are five reasons why.

### 1. You're Not Going Just for Yourself

As with many other things in life when you become a parent, you no longer go to church for yourself alone. You also go for your children. If I lack the energy to go, I go for them. What message am I giving them if I stay home? That church is not a priority. That being tired means that God's people aren't worth the effort.

Let me be clear: Going to church does not make me, or my child, a Christian. Going to church does, however, encourage us, encourage others, and bring us into the presence of God's people. This is priceless. Weekly attendance helps develop a family culture that will, hopefully, continue for our children as they grow older.

Everything we do sends messages to our kids. Going to church weekly sends a simple one: God is a priority for this family.

## 2. Church Is About More than a Sermon

"I don't get to hear the sermon anyway, so what's the point?" Perhaps you've heard (or voiced) that objection, too. But while hearing the sermon is a large part of going to church, it's not the only part. In this stage of your life, you may not get to hear many full sermons. This is hard, but God's Word is powerful. It can penetrate even our hazy, baby-fog brains.

And there are many other good reasons to go to church. Singing with a whole congregation of people can be hugely encouraging. It can be uplifting to your soul when your body is so tired. Church will also give you encouragement, through your friends and fellow believers, as you fellowship with them before or after the service.

## 3. Your Presence Encourages Others

As a believer, sometimes you encourage other believers simply by being present. At the very least, you encourage your minister who has faithfully worked on a sermon throughout the week to bring God's Word to you. You're not just a recipient who gets stuff out of church; you contribute simply by showing up.

Seeing a young, exhausted parent continue to come to church week in and week out is a massive encouragement to the rest of the congregation.

## 4. Those Who Stop Going Don't Always Start Back

I often hear people say, "It's too hard now. We'll wait a few years and then return when the kids are a bit older. They're too young to know the difference anyway." However sincerely you mean this when you stop attending, the reality is that most people will not return for a long time, if ever. Habits change, priorities change, and it becomes effortless to not be at church. How easy it is to slowly drift from the Father who longs to hold you close. You may think this will never happen to you, but the world and the Devil will take any opportunity to pull you from the path of righteousness.

On the other hand, habits are powerful teaching tools for our kids. Even when they're so young that they don't know what's happening, they're learning. They learn either that church doesn't matter or that church is a priority. Which do you want them to believe when they're older?

## 5. Some Church Is Better than No Church

I know firsthand the difficulty of having kids who will not separate from you. My eldest would start crying when we turned the corner onto the road going to church, and that's when he was only 18 months old. Now my youngest doesn't want me to leave him, doesn't like other children anywhere near him, and doesn't want other adults in his space! Leaving him, at this stage, is not really an option, so I miss many sermons. Currently, I stay in church for the singing and prayers as long as I can with him, then I sit with him in his kids' program. I return after the service to fellowship with friends and fellow believers. This is not ideal, but I still get some time with God, encouragement from others, and a chance to encourage them.

And my son gets to hear a message in his kids' program each week, which is also important.

This is a stage. He will not always be clinging to me, and I will, one day, hear a full sermon again and not be too tired to listen to most of it. But for now, this is what I do, and it is better than staying home. My children are seeing me make church and God a priority in my life, and I consider that a win.

Sisters, God holds you close. He longs for a relationship with you and has sent his Son to prove it to you. So hold on to him through the tiredness. Keep him and his people a priority. Draw strength from the church he's given you. Let others know you're tired. God will strengthen you, uplift you, and grow you as you press into his people. No matter how hard it is, keep going. Draw near to him, and he will draw near to you.

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*Australia, where Steve pastored a church. She loves spending time with her kids and has a passion to see them, and other children, grow in the knowledge and love of their Saviour.*

Source: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-reasons-keep-going-church-baby-brain/>

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