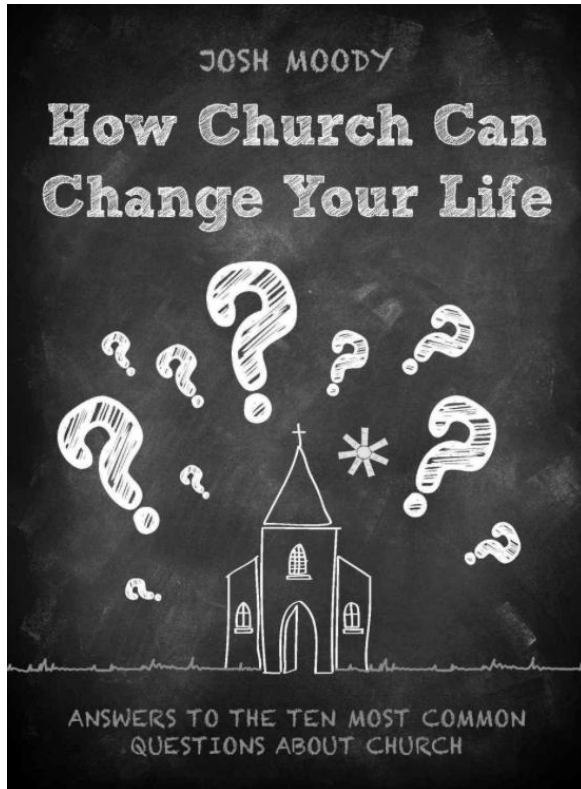


# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 6 SEPTEMBER 2015



## Why Go to Church?

Josh Moody

This summer Christian Focus released my new book *How Church Can Change Your Life*. It's written to answer an overall question that many people today seem to be asking: "Why should I go to church?" To do that, it's broken down then into "the 10 most common questions about church."

In thinking about that question of "Why go to church?" here are some reasons you should consider if you are a Christian:

- 1 The New Testament nowhere even considers the possibility of a Christian who is not also a part of a local church. If you call yourself a Christian and you are not part of a local church, you fall into a category that is at least questionable, and to be avoided if at all possible. All other things being equal, given that there are churches nearby that you could belong to, not going to one may also put you in a category that is by definition outside of the New Testament norms of what is a Christian at all.
- 2 Membership in a local church is a biblical category. Granted that membership rolls, computer databases of membership, and the other paraphernalia of modern organizations are not present in the New Testament, membership nonetheless *is*. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27). Paul in that verse is *not* talking about the universal church, but the actual church at Corinth to whom he is writing. That at least means that if you are not a member of a church – however membership is practiced in your particular church – then you are outside biblical norms for a Christian. It may also mean, if there are plenty of options and real possibility for you to join a church, that for you to refuse to do so may legitimately mean your status as a Christian is questionable.
- 3 The Old Testament uses the same word for church in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (*ecclesia*) as is used to describe the New Testament church. This is a little indication that God has always viewed his people *as a people*, that is, a family, a body, a unit, of which individually Christians are members.
- 4 Another indication of this central place of church in God's plan is Paul's remarkable description in Acts that God gave his blood *for the church*. He says to the Ephesian elders, "Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). That statement is true of no other institution (and again, while the concept of the 'universal' church is present in the New Testament, Paul here is talking specifically about the church at Ephesus). Your local church down the road, if it is a true church, is a church for whom God gave his blood. And you are asking again whether you need to *go* to church?
- 5 Other gatherings of Christians – at Starbucks, in the basement playing video games, and the like – are not the gathering of the church. The church is defined by three elements: right preaching of the Word (or the gospel), right administration of the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and right administration of church discipline

(membership, discipleship, and discipline). It is also not a subsection based around personal interests or age range – a group of Christians with an above average IQ between the ages of 18-25 is not a church.

- 6 Parachurch organizations, campus student groups, mission organizations, and publishers are all 'mission arms of the local church' into a particular mission field. They are Acts 13-14 sendings-out from "Antioch" for a particular purpose and are to be constantly relinked to the work of the church in a rhythm of sending and returning.
- 7 Given these reasons, going to church, joining, and serving are essential fruit for what it means to be a Christian. A church is not an optional extra for a Christian, any more than a wife is an optional extra for a husband.
- 8 Once involved in a church, many wonderful by-products occur as a result: together we are a united witness to the power of Christ; we give lie to the idea that church is declining by proving every Sunday our vibrant health; we serve one another; we

invest in the church and the church invests in us; we experience discipleship and community across generations; we experience the freedom of giving respect to those who watch over us as people who must give an account for the ministry; we are a part of God's plan for changing the world, the local church.

It is faith in Christ and him alone which converts us. But as a true Christian, if we are a true Christian, we will walk over cut glass to be a part of the church. And getting up early every Sunday morning does not count as suffering.



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Source:

<http://godcenteredlife.org/why-go-to-church-2/>

## IDENTIFY WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

If you have come to genuine faith in Christ, you are a member of His church. That's automatic. However, as demonstrated in the above article, this ought to be recognised by, and lived out in, a local congregation.

1. **If your name is currently on the roll of another Presbyterian congregation**, you can ask the Session Clerk there for a transfer certificate to pass on to the Session Clerk here.
2. **If you have previously been a member of another Presbyterian congregation**, but that membership has lapsed, our Session can have a conversation with you with a view to you being added to our roll by a simple resolution of the Session.
3. **If you have been a member of another Christian congregation**, you can ask them to supply their equivalent of a transfer certificate (or a brief letter from the pastor), or if the membership has lapsed, our Session can have a conversation with you with a view to you being added to our roll by a simple resolution of the Session.
4. **If you have never been a member of any congregation before**, the Minister can provide a membership course. Once this is completed, the Session will consider approving a Profession of Faith. This consists of answering simple questions in the church service with the words "I do", which results in membership. If you have never been baptized, this is also performed at this time.