

share values that are important to us. It is comforting to know that if we should have serious needs there are those who will graciously come to our aid. Of course, the flip side of that is true as well. We like to associate with those who are willing to accept our help as we have opportunity to give it.

For some it serves a **financial** function. They see church as an opportunity to build relationships that can be beneficial in the workplace. This may not be a particularly noble function; but there are those who view church attendance in these terms.

Some see that church as their vehicle for **service**. Most of us have a need to serve others in some way and the church offers many such opportunities. Whether it is teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, decorating tables or washing dishes at a fellowship, helping with the children or youth, or supporting missionaries in a foreign land, service for Christ is fulfilling and the church serves that function for many people.

The way church attendance functions in our life really gets down to our motives, and those motives may be very complex. Do we attend because of what we can get, for what we can give; or is it some of both?

There is no doubt that God sees church attendance as an important part of our lives. Do we see it the same way He does?

Take time to reflect...

What function does church have in your life?

In a typical 4-Sunday month, how many church services do you attend?

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Would you like your attendance record to...

- increase
- remain the same
- decrease

What would you like to share in class?

DISCUSSION STARTER #3



LET US ASSEMBLE

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What role should church attendance play in our lives?

There are the extremes. The one extreme is the person who declares “unless I am Providentially hindered, I will be in church every time its doors are open.”

In English, “forsake” is a very strong word. The Greek word used in Hebrews 10:25 is ENKATALEIPO and “forsake” is a very accurate representation of the word. It means “to leave behind,” or “to abandon.” The same word is used earlier in Hebrews 13:5 where God is quoted as saying, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

So, this verse is talking about people who stop attending church with no intent of

of church. Now, I go when I feel like it, and I enjoy it a lot more.”
Of course, there is the other extreme.

“When I was a youngster, our family went to church at Christmas and Easter and maybe a couple of other times during the year. Today, church means so much to me that I hardly ever miss a service.”

NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLY OF YOURSELVES

The other extremist says, “I’ll go to church when I feel like it.”

Most Christians fall somewhere between the two extremes, but they may have leanings toward one or the other.

A Christian might not be dogmatic about church attendance, but he or she makes every effort to attend as many services of the church as possible. On the other hand a Christian may not feel obligated to attend most services, but he or she attends fairly regularly.

Much of what is said on this subject usually goes back to a phrase in Hebrews 10:25 “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.”

The key word in this verse is “forsaking.” It is not wise to build any major doctrine upon a single word in any English translation because the English word may not be the exact equivalent of its Greek or Hebrew counterpart.

returning. Rightly divided, the verse cannot be interpreted to mean, “not **neglecting** the assembling of ourselves together.” Forsaking and neglecting are two different matters all together.

This verse does not address those who are “casual” or “lax” in church attendance.

Of course, one could argue that as one becomes more infrequent in his or her church attendance the more likely he or she is to eventually forsake attendance all together. That is true, but it is no reason that this verse should be used to lay a guilt trip on those who value church attendance but do not show up at every service.

Here is another way to look at the extremes.

Some might say, “When I was a child, my parents saw to it that I was in every church service. Frankly, it turned me off

What function does the church have in our lives? That is a question that may have many answers.

The most obvious function is **spiritual**. Church attendance offers opportunity to gain spiritual knowledge and to have a part in sharing the Gospel with a lost world. It offers insights into Christian living and avenues for expressing one’s faith in Jesus Christ. There are those who believe that this is the sole function of the church; but, in reality, it serves several other functions.

It also has an **emotional** function. It reminds us that we have value and purpose in life, as well as responsibility. Some look to the church for inspiration, the sense that life is worth living. Others find their time at church helps release them from the stresses of life.

It serves a **social** function. We benefit from spending time with people who are interested in us, people we can trust and who