

From the Pastor's Pen

We pastors are always giving invitations to people to come and worship with us—and why wouldn't we? We spend countless hours talking to God regarding the upcoming worship service. We have committed an equal amount of time to studying and reflecting on the Holy Scriptures. Then there are those wonderful times of worship when God's visitation is so magnificent that we witness the transformation of lives for all eternity by the truth of Jesus.

So it is no small wonder that I cringe after giving an invitation to someone only to hear the words, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian." While that may be somewhat true, the problem is that it is only a half-truth and a poor understanding of how God is at work in His Church.

To be fair and honest, the truth is that we all miss worship once in a while, including pastors. And it is even a good thing, on occasion, for ministers to go on a sabbatical (a fancy term for vacation) from church. It actually is healthy for pastors to get away, and all the studies tell us that if we love the people we serve, we will do it for their well-being.

However, it is also true that you can't maintain your Christianity for very long if you never go to church. You see, God has wired His Creation for worship, and corporate worship at that! That is why one of the Big Ten deals with idolatry, for if man doesn't worship God, he will worship something else, because he must worship.

To press my point even further, it is the reason you find worship services in prisons. We find that nursing care facilities provide worship services. We find churches everywhere we go! We simply were made for worship.

The scriptures tell us the same truth. For instance, when Moses, Aaron and Joshua were going to the tent of meeting, seeking direction from God regarding leading the Nation of Israel, God instructed Moses to move the tent to the center of the community and build it to accommodate the people, too. Worship was to be central to the people of Israel. Later, when Solomon began to build a permanent House of Worship, again the temple was designed for large gatherings.

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and He is also the bridegroom, with the Church as His Bride! One would be in error to think that Christ wants a divorce from His lovely bride. So you see, there can be no connection to Christ without receiving His Bride (the Church).

When I was a youngster, I once overheard my mother defending me to a person who was being critical of me, all the while trying to convince my mother that her motives were out of friendship to her. My mother responded, "If you are going to love me, then you are going to love my kids."

I think the same principle applies to Christ and His Church. If you want Him, you must include His Bride.

So yes it is true, you can occasionally miss being in church and maintain your relationship with Christ. But what you cannot do is separate yourself from the Bride of Christ (the Church) and maintain your relationship with the Bridegroom.

Hebrews 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (NIV)

See you in church!

Pastor Tenney