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INTENTIONAL WORSHIP

Do some Sundays seem like the most difficult day of the week? That's the day you just can't seem to get your motor going. But somehow you can give immediate attention to the slightest complaint about how you feel or what the weather might do or tackling what you've already put off all weekend.

Maybe what we're thinking about Sunday - and church - is just plain wrong. When you think of church in terms of what you can get out of it, you're already on the wrong track. Here are some common ways people avoid church.

SHOWING UP ? - This attitude says, "I don't feel like it." Or "I have to be there so people won't think less of me" or maybe "so people will think more of me" for how good I look or how I contribute to the service. Therefore, it would be more humble to stay home, today at least. Especially since so many of those other people who will be at church think they're better than me, anyway. Hmm. Your excuses don't have to make sense - they just have to keep you home.

A variant on this attitude says you've already been to church "a lot" this year, so it would be okay to miss today. Lots of people who claim to be church-goers only attend once a month, if that. That's not a lot.

HOME ALONE ? - This syndrome may be the most common - and most mis-guided - excuse. It goes like, "one doesn't have to go to church to be a Christian" so it's okay to stay home. God is omnipresent, so I can meet with Him here. And lots of people prefer "Bedside Baptist" with "Reverend Sheets" to whatever is going on down the street. Or maybe you figure that TV preacher might be good today and they won't miss me at church anyway. By the time you get coffee made and the paper read, you've had a nap and it's time for lunch. Oh well. You didn't "feel like" going to church anyway.

A variant on this one says the church is full of hypocrites anyway. Of course, except for all the hypocrites who aren't in church. You probably have even better excuses than these, but you get the idea. But you don't find Lone Ranger believers in the Bible. What is God's idea about church?

Psalm 100 gets us in the right frame of mind. ***"Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into His presence with singing! Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him; bless His name! For the LORD is good; His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations."***

God IS. Come and worship even when you don't feel like it - and soon you will feel like it. Go to church, not for what you get - but what you give. Give yourself to God - and you will receive His blessings.

The entire Bible presents a clear emphasis on God's people gathering together often. Jesus said in John 10:27, ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me."*** In the same chapter he talks about bringing all His sheep together into one fold with one shepherd. And in John 17 Jesus prayed for the unity of His sheep, their protection, and the work of God's word in their lives. **YOU need others!**

If you are part of God's flock, you will gather with the rest of the sheep. That's echoed in Hebrews 10:25, ***"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some."*** The context is drawing near to God with a true heart, in faith, and considering how to encourage one another to trust the Lord and live for Him. And as in Psalm 100 - what about the next generation? If you make your personal convenience or comfort your guide, how will the next generation know the Lord's voice - let alone follow Him?

It's not the season for grilling, but think for a moment about toasty warm charcoal briquettes in a grill. Now slide one coal away from the others. What happens? It's warmth goes out. That's you, when you stay away from church. Your faith fades. So does the faith of others, without your encouragement.

Being a Christian is not about showing up and soaking up - it's about growing up. So get to it. **Intentional worship** - that's a good plan. God gives you a good blueprint. ***See you in church!***