

John Piper: Why Going to Church Doesn't Make You a Christian

While worshipping and studying the Bible together are vital for believers, those characteristics alone do not make a man or woman a Christian.

Pastor and author John Piper says words by C.S. Lewis unlocked this revelation in his heart.

“Christianity—now get this southern Bible-belt people, Presbyterian, Baptist, you name it—Christianity is not a willpower religion. It is not a religion of decisions to do what you don't want to do. It is a supernatural work of God by which you are born again so that you want God more than you want anything.

“If you don't want God more than you want anything else, you are not a Christian,” Piper writes in a recent blog post.

No doubt church attendance is good for believers.

“One of the most striking scientific discoveries about religion in recent years is that going to church weekly is good for you,” T.M. Lauhrmann writes for the *New York Times*. “Religious attendance—at least, religiosity—boosts the immune system and decreases blood pressure. It may add as much as two to three years to your life. The reason for this is not entirely clear.”

But personal devotion to a building or checking an attendance box will not get someone into heaven.

Instead, as Jesus instructed in John 3, for people to become one with Him, they must be born again.

“That is what the new birth is. It takes hearts that are in love with the world and puts them in love with Christ and His Father and the gospel and the glory of being saved and promised to go into everlasting paradise of joy,” Piper writes.

“And if it is a ho-hum, boring, insignificant thing to you and everything else in the world is real to you, you are not a Christian. I don’t care how many decisions you have made, how many aisles you have walked, how many cards you signed. I don’t care what you do, what church you go to. That is not Christianity. That was a revolution for me,” he continues.

But as America—and the world—propels toward the future, church as many understand it is being redefined.

Church attendance is declining, and the once-popular megachurches are losing members to smaller campuses.

Furthermore, how people relate to one another within a congregation, particularly within ministry training, evolves with time, according to LifeWay Christian Resources President Thom Rainer.

Though the changes affect church communities, Piper’s point remains: It’s not the church that makes the believer.