

When Going to Church Feels Like a Dreaded Chore

When I was a teenager I had a laundry list of chores, from emptying the dishwasher to vacuuming the floor to dusting the house to washing the car—to laundry.

At first, I enjoyed the chores because it made me feel like I was helping out my mother and I was getting a boost in my allowance for taking on more responsibility. But after the excitement of serving and its rewards wore off, I dreaded my chores. It was drudgery. My mother had to nag me to do them and I did them half-heartedly just to collect my allowance.

Going to **church** shouldn't feel like a dreaded chore, but for more and more people it does. Consider these statistics: There are more than 317 million people in the United States at this moment, according to the U.S. Census. Gallup Research reports roughly 118 million people go to church on Sundays. Type "**I hate going to church**" into Google and you get 103 million results in one-third of a second. That means there are at least 103 million different articles, blog posts, and discussion threads online about how much people hate going to church.

I'm no math wiz, but a quick number crunch yields a negative quotient. In other words, even if you skew the numbers in the most positive possible light—if you conclude that not all the 103 million results were from the U.S. and not all of them were talking about the **Christian** church—it's still a disturbing number. After all, those 103 million results don't take into account the thousands of comments on those same articles, blog posts and discussion threads.

When the Church is a War Zone

So what's going on here? Why does going to **church** feel like a

dreaded chore for so many people? And what can you do if going to church is a laborious experience for you? I'll admit that I've experienced this church-dread syndrome at times in my life. In one case I dreaded going to church because it felt like I was entering a warzone. So many brothers and sisters in Christ were spewing petty gossip about one another and I never knew when I was going to get hit with so-called friendly fire. In another case the church grew cultish. The pastors were so controlling that I couldn't make a move without disapproval, scrutiny or downright rebuke.

Of course, that's not what most people experience—it's an extreme—but unfortunately it's not the only church experiences I've dreaded during my walk with God. I've also dreaded going to churches with back-to-back services where people are ushered in and out like cattle on a tight schedule that essentially locks the **Holy Spirit** out of the service. I've dreaded going to **church** services where the atmosphere was dead and dry and religious. I've dreaded going to church services where cliques ran the show and few could penetrate the hard shell around these chosen ones.

Are We Just Making Excuses?

My point here is not to criticize churches. I'm merely exposing some of the many reasons why people dread going to church. My research into some of those 103 million Google results show scores of other reasons, including: a rote experience week in and week out; a pressure to perform; untrustworthy leadership; too much manipulation to give; and irrelevant messages. Some of the reasons people view church like a dreaded chore are bona fide and other are excuses, but entire books have been written on the topic of not enjoying the modern church experience.

So where do we go from here? First, let's check our hearts. If you've been going from church to church to church and walk away with a mouthful of criticism every time, it's possible

that you're looking at the **church** through filters. Maybe you were hurt in a church a while back and see things in other churches that remind you of that hurt. It could also be possible that you're just looking for a perfect church—and that just doesn't exist.

I believe it's important to fellowship with a community of believers. I believe we should be plugged into a local church—or at least a home group. The local **church** is a place of equipping, healing, exploring natural and **spiritual gifts**, accountability, and so much more. And Hebrews 10:25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

Finding the Perfect Church

Of course, it's not always easy to find a church that fits your beliefs, your personality, and your location. So, again, where do we go from here? If going to church every week feels like a dreaded chore, it may be time for you to look for a new church. Going to **church** should equip, inspire and encourage you—not leave you bored, drained or wishing you'd just watched Joyce Meyer on TV that morning.

And if you are in the church hunting process even now, don't judge the church on your first visit—unless, of course, there's blatant deception or sin your midst. Some of my best friends are people who I didn't like all that much when I first met them. The same goes with a church. So don't make snap judgments. Jesus is all about His church. In fact, He said, “I will build My **church**, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Don't give up. There's a church out there that will refresh you, give you opportunities to serve God with a pure heart, pour out revelation to help you in your daily walk and more.

Keep looking because, “Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God” (Psalm 92:13). Amen.

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