

The Christian's Responsibility to the Local Church (3)

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Christians in the first century were often together, engaged in activities which grew out of their common faith. The earliest disciples were “continuing daily with one accord in the temple” (Ac 2:46); they prayed together (Ac 4:24-31; 12:12ff); they sang together (Col 3:16); they studied together, learning at the feet of apostles and prophets (Ac 2:42; 5:42; 13:1).

But while many of these “together” activities could be done informally on a daily basis, it is clear that the early churches also had definite occasions of meeting for corporate worship. The brethren in Troas “came together to break bread” on the first day of the week. Paul speaks about abuses of the Lord’s supper when the Corinthians “come together as a church ... in one place” (1 Cor 11:18, 20). Paul spoke about other improper activities among the Corinthians when they assembled for edification (1 Cor 14:19, 23-25).

There are two basic errors made today concerning the corporate worship of the church. The first error places all the emphasis upon activities outside the local church assembly. It is the attitude that says, *“I don’t have to go to any church to be a good Christian.”* But God does expect His children to meet together for corporate worship and warns us against the “forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some” (Heb 10:25). Seems some even in the first century took a dim view of church meetings.

The second error concerning corporate worship is the opposite of the first. This attitude places too much emphasis upon the scheduled meeting times. This is a “punch the clock” mentality which says after the Sunday morning service, “I’ve done my Christian duty for the week.” Even those who are knowledgeable tend to measure the “faith” of a Christian by whether he or she attends the corporate worship somewhere.

The fact is that both aspects of group worship are important. The singing in a member’s home might be just as edifying and surely is as glorifying to God as the singing at 2053 High School Road. A prayer offered to God in a gathering of brethren in a living room surely has the same power and is heard by the same God as those which reverberate through the auditorium.

A Christian’s responsibility to the local church includes an eager and joyful participation in group worship whether at informal gatherings or scheduled services.