



# “Are Church Meetings Mandatory?”



*QUESTION BACKGROUND: A distraught mother contacted me because her child's teacher told the child that she wasn't a Christian if she didn't go to church. The child is a student at a fundamentalist Christian school which bases its beliefs on the Bible, under the paradigm of 'sola scriptura'<sup>1</sup>. The mother asked me the question, “Is what the teacher said correct?” To answer her question properly, I needed to uncover for her what a Christian really is, and then address the point of her concern.*



*MY BACKGROUND: I was born into the Methodist church, which morphed into the Uniting Church Australia. I spent a short time in the Anglican church, then in pentecostal and charismatic churches. I came out of the church system in 1987 and was told by Father that I would not enter my destiny if I didn't leave. In 2010, after many decades following church teaching as my plumbline, I was introduced to the Kingdom by Myles Munroe and have been allowing Father to train me as a son ever since. With that background, I write what I know of Christianity from experience and observation, even if the majority of Christendom disagrees with me.*



## **(1) What is a Christian?**

**READ: “QUESTION - What is a Christian?”<sup>2</sup>**

## **(2) Are Church Meetings Mandatory?**

### **[a] Compulsory Attendance**

The most common attribute with church-goers, that sets them apart from other believers, is their stance on church service<sup>3</sup> attendance. For evangelicals, attendance is stated as an absolute necessity and that failure to attend is considered to be evidence of ‘backsliding’. Pressure to attend is so strong, that emphasis on attendance breaks up friendships and causes many to be excommunicated from the group.

So where does the dogma of church attendance come from?

Initially, under Roman Catholicism, it was to maintain control over the populace. It was from the pulpit that papal teaching, indoctrination and monitoring of the adherents was done. With the Protestant Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the pressure to attend would have been seen as an obligation of service to God, hence the introduction of the term ‘church service’ to replace the Catholic mass.

From my time in the church system, pressure to attend revolves around two factors: (1) What the pastor wants to achieve; & (2) The biblical precedent the pastor uses with the congregation to justify it.

With regard to the pastor's perspective on attendance, I discovered the following from my time being an elder and from what Holy Spirit showed me. They applied pressure to attend for the following reasons:

1. To have a large congregation – That was considered a spiritual sign that they were being blessed for doing God's work. It often led to a form of spiritual pride and an unconscious ‘leader-board’ of who's-who in the local and international church system.
2. For generating self-worth – The size of the congregation was unconsciously used by the pastor to gain self-worth. They justified their employment and their worthiness as a Christian by attendances.

1 – SEE: “What Happens if We Lose *Sola Scriptura*”

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/What-Happens-if-We-Lose-Sola-Scriptura.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/What-Happens-if-We-Lose-Sola-Scriptura.pdf)

2 – [canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-What-is-a-Christian.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-What-is-a-Christian.pdf)

3 – Attending a church service (formal Sunday meetings) is considered their fulfilment of their obligation to ‘serve God’.

3. To keep their church business afloat – To ensure that they were paid their weekly wages. This was also the reason for perpetuating tithing, even though it was a 4<sup>th</sup> century invention in Roman Catholicism and was not practised by the 1<sup>st</sup> century foundational believers.

Many may not believe what I've written, but when you work very closely with pastors and talk with them over an extended period of time, those three points (plus others) become obvious as their motivation for pushing attendance.

Pastor's justify attendance using scripture so that pressure can be applied without being questioned. The reason for that is because their system elevates the Bible to the high status of 'The Word of God' (AKA 'The Word'), when it isn't.<sup>4</sup> Here's how the teaching goes: The Bible states that we should not forsake the gathering of the brethren. That's based on Hebrews 10:25, with some going as far as listing 100 verses to support their stance.<sup>5</sup>

The point really is, What was Paul meaning? What was the author wanting to convey to us?

Paul's statement is not a command, injunction or demand. It's advice only. The reason being that "followers of Jesus" are relational and that living in community as they did allowed them to support each other in many ways. Being out of community isolates a person and makes life harder to bear, especially when there is opposition or persecution from society. Joining together in all types of gatherings was (and is) good advice for group member's wellbeing.

Also, check this better translation out:

**Hebrews 10:25 (MIRROR)** – *In the light of our free access to the Father, let us extend that embrace to one another. Our gatherings are no longer a repetition of tradition but an essential fellowship where we remind one another of our true identity. Let us do so with greater urgency now the day has dawned in our understanding.* (The prophetic shadow has been replaced by the light of day.)

In addition to the verse in Hebrews, pressure is often applied by stating that God is only present when 2 or 3 are gathered. That infers that when we are by ourselves and not 'in church', Father isn't with us. Of course, that's erroneous teaching because the context of '2 or 3' actually relates to discipline within the group, not the need to attend.<sup>6</sup>

Another pressure comes from ministers and some pastors who call their church building a temple or 'the house of the Lord'. As the temple was the set place to worship Jehovah in the OT, they then state that God can't be worshipped anywhere else but in their building.

## [b] Unsafe to Not Meet

The pressure is always to attend church services because it's said to put the person in spiritual danger. That danger is considered to be offending God or making yourself vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Both those are intended to cause fear in a person rather than logical understanding. Fear is a tool of the enemy, so we shouldn't give in to it or let it be what determines what we do.

One of the pressures put on Christians to enforce attendance is: "You'll lose your salvation if you don't go to church". As if our salvation depended on us! Salvation is a FREE gift that we can't work for or work to

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4 – "Focus on the Word of God, not the word of God"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Focus-on-the-Word-of-God-not-the-word-of-God.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Focus-on-the-Word-of-God-not-the-word-of-God.pdf)

"The Concept of 'The Word' in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Concept-of-The-Word-in-the-1st-Century.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Concept-of-The-Word-in-the-1st-Century.pdf)

"The Word of God is What the Spirit Gives Us to Speak"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/The-Word-of-God-is-What-the-Spirit-Gives-Us-to-Speak.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/The-Word-of-God-is-What-the-Spirit-Gives-Us-to-Speak.pdf)

5 – "Do Not Forsake The Gathering" [www.openbible.info/topics/do\\_not\\_forsake\\_the\\_gathering](http://www.openbible.info/topics/do_not_forsake_the_gathering)

6 – "A Different Take On: When 2 or 3 Gather"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Different-Take-On-When-2-or-3-Gather.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Different-Take-On-When-2-or-3-Gather.pdf)

maintain. That pressure statement is based on a tenet of Arminianism<sup>7</sup>, which is a man-thought-up theology, not revelation from the Spirit, coming directly to us from Father.

Consider those in persecuted countries who can't meet with others. Are they not Christians because they don't go to church? Of course not. No one would say otherwise.

What about the Desert Fathers<sup>8</sup> who lived in caves and holes in the ground in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century? Were they not Christians because they lived an isolated life? "The Desert Fathers had a major influence on the development of Christianity"<sup>9</sup>, so they obviously were Christians.

From my experience, the pressure to "go to church" comes from those who are intent on creating an organisation and keeping it functioning at all costs. It's also pressure used by those who want to justify their attendance at Sunday services.

## **[c] Sunday Attendance**

Another pressure for church attendance specifies the necessity to go to formal church services on a Sunday. However, the founding believers in mid-1<sup>st</sup> century met every day of the week in each others homes for fellowship and meals. Later the 'first day of the week' (known as 'The Lord's Day') became a focal point for the followers of 'The Way'<sup>10,11</sup>. But, it wasn't until the 4<sup>th</sup> century that Sunday was the Christian rest day.

*"On 7 March 321, Constantine I, Rome's first Christian Emperor, decreed that Sunday would be observed as the Roman day of rest. It is recorded that he decreed: "On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost."*<sup>12</sup>

Despite the official adoption of Sunday as a day of rest by Constantine, the seven-day week and the nundial<sup>13</sup> cycle continued to be used side by side until at least the Calendar of 354 AD and probably later. In 363, Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea prohibited observance of the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday), and encouraged Christians to work on the Saturday and rest on the Lord's Day (Sunday).<sup>14</sup>

Until Sunday became a Christian work-less holy day in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, how many working class people would have been able to come together in fellowship during the week? Think about slaves and servants, as well as soldiers in the military. Being free to take time off work would have only been the prerogative of the wealthy and self-employed. Obviously then, Holy Spirit didn't instigate Sunday worship in the first place.

## **The Kingdom Reality**

In the kingdom we have freedom, not bondage to laws. There's never any legalism compelling us to do things under threat of some kind of punishment. Father's heart of love doesn't demand anything like that. Instead, he draws us in to where he wants us to go and trains us to function the way that's best for us in

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7 – READ: "Calvinism vs. Arminianism" [www.learnreligions.com/calvinism-vs-arminianism-700526](http://www.learnreligions.com/calvinism-vs-arminianism-700526)

8 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert\\_Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers)

9 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert\\_Fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers)

10 – The believers were first called Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Before that, "followers of the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14)

11 – Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10

12 – Philip Schaff (1867) "History of the Christian Church: Vol. II: From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great A.D. 311–600"

(Pub. New York: Charles Scribner) p:380 note 1 [www.amazon.com.au/Constantine-Great-Gregory-D-311-600/dp/0461711710](http://www.amazon.com.au/Constantine-Great-Gregory-D-311-600/dp/0461711710) [2020 ed.]

13 – The nundinal cycle, market week, or 8-day week. These were the market days of the ancient Roman calendar, forming a kind of weekend

including, for a certain period, rest from work for the ruling class (patricians). [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nundinae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nundinae)

14 – MODIFIED: From [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday#Sunday\\_in\\_Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday#Sunday_in_Christianity)

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the long-run. Kingdom life is a joy, not a burden to bear.

In addition to that, **Jesus never came to start a new religion**. He came to re-introduce the Kingdom of Heaven back onto Earth, just like it was before The Fall. This Kingdom was to have him as King, and his people as vice-regents (i.e. princes) ruling and managing Earth as Adam originally did.

From Heaven's perspective, what we believe, what we become and what we do, must be based on spiritual Kingdom reality. If it doesn't, then it has no place in the Kingdom of God on Earth. More importantly, everything must originate in Heaven (i.e. be based on a blueprint from Heaven), otherwise it is foreign to the Kingdom. That means, anything people make up (invent or build) which doesn't come from such a blueprint, is not approved by Father. These 'inventions' are the things that Jesus called "hay, straw and stubble", which won't move with the Kingdom into the next Age.

Christianity (the Christian religion) was not instituted from Heaven's blueprint like the Israelite tabernacle and temple were, so it's outside of the Kingdom.<sup>15</sup> It actually developed out of the infusion of pagan religion which began in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century, and which the Apostles fought vigorously to keep at bay. However, after the last Apostle died, there was no unifying human vehicle to prevent religion from taking over the Kingdom Communities scattered around the Roman Empire. Life among the saints<sup>16</sup> gradually degenerated into the Christian religion over the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries until it was formalized by Emperor Constantine in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The quick decline into religion is evidenced by the existence of the Eucharist<sup>17</sup> in a 1<sup>st</sup> century document known as the Didache.<sup>18</sup>

As Christianity is outside of the King's Kingdom, church leaders are free to make whatever laws, rules, protocols, dogmas and teachings that they like. On the other hand, those who genuinely come into the Kingdom are sons,<sup>19</sup> and they follow the King as he speaks to them through Holy Spirit. Sons don't adhere to church doctrine unless they aren't fully committed to the King. That non-Kingdom allegiance causes mixture through religion and legalism, and that stops them from growing and developing in their sonship.

In conclusion, it's quite clear that church meetings are not compulsory or mandatory because they have nothing to do with the Kingdom. In fact, not attending is not a dereliction of our duty to the King – just the opposite.

Life in the Kingdom is about living life with the King while we live in our society, connecting with others, and doing what Holy Spirit shows us to do.

For lots of teaching on life in the Kingdom go to this webpage of mine: **Teaching Archives**<sup>20</sup>

**IMPORTANT:** What has our King told us to do in regards to meetings? He had us start a Kingdom Community, because that's how the Kingdom works. The Kingdom is all about relationship, just as the Trinity is in relationship and we're in relationship with them. The foundational believers of the 1<sup>st</sup> century lived that way. Here's how it's recorded:

**Acts 2:44-47** (NKJV) – *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple<sup>21</sup>, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*

15 – SEE: "QUESTION - Are Church Meetings Mandatory?"

[canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-Are-Church-Meetings-Mandatory.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-Are-Church-Meetings-Mandatory.pdf)

16 – A term for believers. (See Romans 1:7 in most English translations)

17 – This is the high church version of Holy Communion as practised in Roman Catholicism.

18 – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist#Early\\_Christian\\_sources](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist#Early_Christian_sources)

19 – READ: "QUESTION - What is a Christian?" [canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-What-is-a-Christian.pdf](http://canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/QUESTION-What-is-a-Christian.pdf)

20 – [canberraforerunners.org/?page\\_id=34386](http://canberraforerunners.org/?page_id=34386) (There's much more on every webpage on my website)

21 – The temple and the synagogues were where god-seekers would go. That's where they went to talk with them and to share.

**Acts 2:44-47** (NKJV) – *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.*

This is exactly how Father organised us to start our Kingdom Community – sharing, eating meals together and looking after each other. In fact, he later told us that he wants to see a Kingdom Community on every street.

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**(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)**