

do we do these things? We do them not out of mere habit - although we may have a routine or regular way of doing them. Nor do we do them just because we are told this is what we ought to do. Nor do we do them just because others encourage us to do them. So why do we do them? Why do we go to church?

Hunger

Perhaps the word hunger will help us. Jesus Christ teaches us to hunger and thirst for righteousness (*Matthew 5.6*). It includes seeking God, his kingdom, and the Saviour. In other words our aim is to know God and to know him better. We want to know more of his presence, power and promises. Our concern is for our souls to be fed and nurtured.

Souls

Please note the reference is to our souls and not just our

minds. Yes, we have minds. We need to be informed. We do not want to be ignorant. Our minds are not to be bypassed. The mind matters. But we also need to appreciate it is through the mind our wills are addressed. We can know the right things but do wrong. It is what we are at heart that matters. Our concern should always be to meet with God.

We are never to be content with just singing, praying and listening. Knowing God matters most.

Acts of worship are times for us to be taken up with the wonder of who God is, what he has done, and what he promises.

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Seeking God

Actions and motives differ. What we do and the reason for our action vary from person to person. Let us explore this theme further. And let us do so with a single focus. We could look at how we behave with our loved ones, or with friends, or strangers. Instead we shall limit our inquiry to church. Why do we go to church?

Habit

Some attend out of habit. They were taken to church as a child. They kept up the practice. They continue in it.

Some go because their friends go. Many a young person started to attend a youth group or church meeting

after an invitation from a friend. At first they may have been anxious not to be called discourteous by turning the invitation down. Or they may have been curious as to what happens in a place of worship. Whatever the reason they went and still go.

Needs

Others attend because they have a need. They are troubled, worried, or stressed. To whom can they turn? Who will provide guidance, help or support? Perhaps, they think, someone at church will. After all, Christians are meant to be caring and loving people.

Some go for spiritual reasons. They feel guilty. They are aware they are not right with God. Others have a deep sense within that they must answer to God one day for all that they think, say and do. Yet others

seek for meaning. Who am I? Why am I here? Why do I exist? What happens when we die? There are many questions we ask. The big questions of life often lie behind the reason why some go to church.

We and I

Let us turn again to our question: Why do we go to church? Now we want to put the emphasis upon ourselves. Why do **we** go to church? Or to make the point more emphatic we could change the personal pronoun from we to **I**.

Any, some or none of the reasons above may explain why you go to church (at this point the assumption is that you do). We are not asking how often you go. Our concern is to consider our aims and motives. So let us adapt our question a little. Let us think about what we go to church to do.

We could begin our answer by speaking about the main activities of Christians at a church meeting. They sing, they pray and they listen.

Listen

To what do they listen? Primarily to the Bible. At church verses from the Bible are usually read, sung and explained. We sing psalms, we listen to Bible readings and we listen those called by God to help us understand God's Word.

Sing

To whom do we sing? We sing to God most of the time. Sometimes, when we sing, we may call each other, or even ourselves, to put our trust in God. Psalm 95, for example, begins with the call: 'O come, let us sing to the Lord'. We tell each other and ourselves what we should do. However, most of the time God is the one

whom we address. We praise him for who he is, what he has promised and what he does. Our hearts are to be filled with gratitude, love and adoration as we join in songs of praise.

Pray

To whom do we pray? We address our petitions to Almighty God. He is our Maker. He is all-powerful, wise, and gracious. He promises forgiveness to those who sincerely call upon him in the name of Jesus. Why in the name of Jesus? Because Jesus Christ is the only one through whom and in whom we may approach God. There is no other way to him.

Just

We are sinners. God is just. He will and must punish sin. Is there no way of escape, because not one of us can escape from our sins? Yes there is.

Substitute

Christ died in the place of sinners. He died the death we deserve to die. Those who believe he did, and that only he can make us right with God, are those who have access to God. That is why prayer is offered in the name of Jesus. .

Adoption

We do not use his name as a sort of mantra. We use it because we know who Christ is and what he has done for us. Though him alone, and on the ground of his perfect life and substitutionary death alone, enter God's presence. Those who entrust themselves to Jesus Christ will never be rejected. God adopts them into his family. They are made his children.

Seek

We must dig deeper. Yes, we pray, sing and listen. But why