



## Preacher's Pen *by Gene McCoy*

You may be surprised by the suggestion that some of the best reasons people have for attending the meetings of the church may not be acceptable to God. It isn't that some of these are bad reasons, but that none of them should be a primary reason. In other words, there is a reason for attending that not only surpasses all other reasons but stands alone in the absence of all others. That which distinguishes this reason from all others is that it places God at the center, where He belongs, whereas the others place man at the center. When people put God at the center, faithful weekly church attendance is never a challenge or a chore. Neither is it a reason for boasting.

Consider some of the reasons commonly given for attending the meetings of the church.

The young couple that has neglected the weekly appointment with the Lord at His Supper in favor of their weekend getaways and recreational interests now has children who are beyond the infancy stage. The parents, who begin to take their role more seriously, will express the responsibility to "get their children in church." But why? If it hasn't been important to them, why should it be important for their children? Will they be satisfied if their children follow their example and drop out of church when they become adults? These adults repeat the mantra, "My children are getting to the age when they need to be in church." Just what is the age when a person needs to begin attending church or the age at which he no longer needs to be in church? If we are to believe that some people need to be in church more than others, it is the negligent adult guilty of sin who needs to be in church more than the innocent child!

Many have said the reason they attend church is that they were "raised that way." So it is out of respect for parental training, and not love for the Lord that you attend church.

Other selfish reasons people give in favor of their practice of attending the meetings of the church are equally thoughtless of God and, therefore, unacceptable to Him.

"I attend church," say many people, "because I receive a blessing." "My week just isn't complete when I have to miss. I feel like something is missing," say some.

To many church attendance is merely another social outlet. They enjoy the good, wholesome environment and associating with respectable citizens who are nice and affirming. It makes them feel good and socially acceptable.

A large number of people attend church out of obligation to obey God's commands. Still others attend so as to provide a good example for others.

Some attend because they sense the need for a spiritual uplift after a hard week. A few even recognize they need teaching and exhortation from the Word of God.

Can you see how selfish all these reasons are? Use them in the context of your marriage and let your spouse tell you how acceptable they are!

### **Apply this to your marriage.**

How satisfied would your spouse be if you offered any of these reasons for faithfulness to your marriage? To the person who uses his children as a reason for attending church I ask if he would offer that as the reason for going home after work. What security does this provide your spouse after the children are grown and leave home?

Would your spouse feel especially loved and cherished if you said your love was motivated by the way you were raised? In other words, it really has nothing to do with your spouse but everything to do with the way your parents raised you.

How would you expect your spouse to react if you said your reasons for hanging around her revolved around how good it made you feel or look? Or how having her around enhanced your position in society or made you feel fulfilled and happy? These are all about "me." It is all about getting. There is no expression of giving in these reasons.

It is easy to see that many go to church with the expectation of getting than of giving. No wonder there are so many spats pertaining to matters of personal preference relating to the church meetings.

Consider, now, the best reasons for faithfully attending the meetings of the church.

### **Response to God's grace**

Worship is a grateful response from recipients of grace. Grace is giving. God gives grace and we give worship.



Grace is God's expression of love. Worship is a reciprocal expression of love. Our attendance at the Lord's Supper and meetings of the church is not for selfish gain or glory, but a humble expression of gratitude for His grace and partial fulfillment of our enlistment as servants in training.

#### **Responsibility to God's church**

The church is community. It is family. Her members meet at the family table with the expressed desire to honor the Father by fulfilling His desires for His children. Their attendance, therefore, is motivated by the desire to serve and strengthen His family. This they do as they encourage, build up and admonish one another in love.

In response to God's grace and responsibility to God's church, our motivation for attending the family gatherings revolves around God and other Christians.

When attending church meetings stops being about me and starts being about responding to God's grace and responsibility to His family, the Christian will not be satisfied with faithfully attending the Sunday meeting only. Instead, he will look forward to every opportunity to gather with the saints.

Ponder a question in the wider context of your participation in the family. How would the church fare if every Christian's practice were just like mine? Would the church flounder or flourish?