

## Giving an Answer (I Peter 3:15)

*Conflicts Over "Attendance"*

### Answer the following false positions:

1. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some, but rather **encouraging** one another all the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

<sup>1</sup>This is the only passage commanding going to church. Are you encouraged when you go to church? If so, great! <sup>2</sup>If not, this passage in Hebrews 10:25 is somehow missing your situation.

Encouraging one another in the assembly: For many this has seldom happened. <sup>3</sup>The hard-line Churches of Christ have a tacit [*implied; B.A.Y*] agreement:

- Never say anything real or intimate in a Bible study or sermon.
- Make sure everything said has been said many times before.
- Make sure most of the guilt dealt out in the sermon is aimed at people not in attendance or not members of the Church of Christ.

<sup>4</sup>Much of the guilt dealt out in lessons and sermons is aimed at those who have left the Churches of Christ, with the effect that anyone who leaves knows what they will get after they are gone.

<sup>5</sup>One of the reasons members of the hard-line Churches of Christ find it so difficult to leave is that they honestly believe they cannot miss a church service. So on Saturday night or Sunday morning they get the yellow pages out and search through all the listings hoping that there will be one that will be okay to meet with. But there isn't one, so they go back to the discouraging church they are stuck with until they completely burn out (<http://ex-churchofchrist.com/unbiblicalCoC.htm>)".

2. "<sup>6</sup>Some Christian denominations impose coercive attendance requirements on members. Members are expected to attend every time the church doors are open. Services are held on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, midweek service, special meetings, evangelistic outreaches and "revival" meetings. <sup>7</sup>These commitments become so numerous that members are doing some church function every day of the week. The brainwashing technique used here is to keep the members swamped with church activities so they cannot participate in any activity outside the church. <sup>8</sup>The mood in the church office almost becomes paranoia. The church officials are afraid the members will learn something about the Bible from outside the church. Reading this web page would be strictly forbidden in most churches" (<http://www.biblelife.org/bondage.htm>).

3. "I just don't get it. <sup>9</sup>In your article you said that if people aren't at every service then the church must withdraw from them. <sup>10</sup>Hebrews 10:25 is talking about people who stop going to church altogether, not those who miss a few times here and there because they're busy with other things like work, school, or urgent family matters. Who are you to judge that? <sup>11</sup>So what if someone just needs to sleep on Sunday morning or has to work Wednesday night. Didn't God even rest? <sup>12</sup>Don't we have to provide for our families? <sup>13</sup>You are a legalist with your teachings" (Beth Johnson; Email to Brian A. Yeager; 12/05/2004).

1. For one, you cannot be commanded to “go to church” since that action is impossible. You come together with brethren forming the church [assembly]. Thus, you cannot forsake the “assembling” together (**Hebrews 10:25**). Yes, this is the only direct command saying we cannot forsake the assembling of ourselves together. How many of those commands do you need (**Luke 6:46; 11:28**)? Though **Hebrews 10:25** is not repeated elsewhere, there are other passages that teach the same things (**Acts 20:7, I Corinthians 11:33, and Hebrews 3:13**). Secondly, on this point, the word their translating “encouraging” [parakaleō; Strong’s # 3870] in **Hebrews 10:25** is wrong. The word really means: “to admonish; exhort” (Thayer; page 482). This is completely different from the idea one arrives at when thinking about being encouraged based on their definition of this term.

2. Again, you cannot go to church and the argument made by these folks about being encouraged is misleading. However, when you assemble with the brethren you should be edified (**Ephesians 4:16**). However, those who do not want to be there won’t get anything out of worship, studies, etc. if they do not invest themselves. We are COMMANDED to comfort and edify each other which shows we all have to put work into what we do when we come together (**I Thessalonians 5:11; cf. Hebrews 10:23-25**). Also, those in sin who refuse to change will hate worshipping God (**Proverbs 14:2 and Matthew 15:7-9**) and will surely hate hearing the truth (**II Thessalonians 2:10**). Their worship is vain anyway (**Proverbs 21:27**). Thus, if you are not encouraged by assembling with the saints, you are either the problem or you are surely part of the problem. Worship is not about getting something out of it, but putting yourself into worshipping God. This, by the way, will be the picture in Heaven that some would hate and will just never have to see anyway (**Revelation 4:10-11; 7:11-12**).

3. The same things ought to be taught in every congregation of the Lord’s body (**I Corinthians 4:17**). However, an implied, stated, or otherwise man-made agreement to teach a certain way or not would be sinful (**Colossians 2:20-23**). It is true that a lot of so-called “churches of Christ” have teachers, preachers, and elders who never preach or teach anything of substance. This is dead wrong (**Acts 20:26-27**). However, even in those groups, you are only part of the problem if you do not help to correct that (**Galatians 6:1**). Here, where any Bible subject can be addressed at any and all times we come together, that’d never be an excuse. By the way, these charges are just that, excuses not to assemble with your brethren to help them and yourself get to Heaven.

4. When someone leaves the body they are lost (**Ephesians 5:23**). That’s what they get when they are gone. However, contrary to this charge, there is no point in constantly preaching to those who left the Lord and aren’t there to hear it!

5. This part of the quote is sad, if true. First off, if someone wants to leave a congregation they’re bound not to just run away. If that person has a biblical problem with the brethren, they must try to resolve it (**Matthew 18:15-17 and Luke 17:3-4**). But, “oh no, I’m the victim of that hateful preaching against my sinful life” is what those who run away proclaim. Well, if your life is right and your stand is true, what’s there to run from? Don’t those who look through the yellow pages to find another congregation realize that they are leaving the local body they are a member of (**Romans 12:4-5**)? How does the arm cut itself from the body and still play the victim?

6. There are no such things as Christian denominations. Forcing someone to attend every time the doors are open is God’s word talking (**Hebrews 10:25**), not man’s.

7. If you could get “brethren” to assemble daily to keep them from the world, that’d be right in line with what God wants us to do (**Acts 2:42-46; cf. John 17:14-16 and James 4:4**).

8. There is no such thing as a biblical, physical “church office” (with a secretary, etc.) which occupies church officials. Secondly, doesn’t our study and reference to his words disprove the charge that we wouldn’t want anyone examining anything outside of the building the saints assemble in? Furthermore, shouldn’t we be learning the SCRIPTURES when we are not assembled too (**John 5:39, Acts 17:10-11, and II Timothy 2:15**; cf. **Psalms 1:1-2**)? This is the old straw man tactic.

9. The article referenced by this woman was published locally here (prior to my move to El Paso when I was sending the bulletins down), in Butler, PA, and online on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004 ([http://www.wordsoftruth.net/wordsoftruthbull12\\_05\\_2004.html](http://www.wordsoftruth.net/wordsoftruthbull12_05_2004.html)). The article said: “The word of God clearly establishes that we must not forsake the coming together of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). However, why would we not want to be with our brethren at every service? There is a huge problem with the supposed Christian who does not assemble with his or her brethren faithfully. That problem needs addressed. Discipline needs to be practiced on those who refuse to faithfully serve God and assemble with their brethren, for such an attitude is walking disorderly and is contrary to the doctrine of Christ (II Thessalonians 3:6)”. Sorry, the charge here just isn’t true. Those who cannot be with the saints simply cannot be with them. Those reasons are often false or just excuses, but those who truly cannot be with the brethren to worship God are not walking disorderly. Typically, they’re not walking at all.

10. This quote is self revealing. Christ is supposed to be my life (**Colossians 3:1-4**), but my life is too busy for Him. Really, is that so? The Lord commands to come together, what could be more important on this earth?

11. The reference in this part of the quote would be the seventh day in which God ceased work (**Genesis 2:1-2**). I suppose some think that He took a nap on that day. NEWFLASH: **Psalms 121:1-8**

12. Yes, we must provide for our families (**I Timothy 5:8**). However, how can we even begin to think that we can use one command of God against another? If such is true, we could say that it is a sin to steal (**Ephesians 4:28**), but I have to provide for my family so I’m going to steal. Moreover, doesn’t assembling with the saints provide for your family according to **Matthew 6:24-34**?

13. Legalism is defined by Webster as: “strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code” (Webster’s New World College Dictionary; page 818). I am not sure how you can be excessive in conforming to God’s laws. I suppose that would be a judgment many would make if you took God “too seriously” or some garbage like that. One cannot go beyond what God has said (**Proverbs 30:5-6**). That would cover not making laws that God has not made. However, strict and literal adherence to God’s law is what God wants us to do (**Deuteronomy 4:2; 5:32, Matthew 28:20, II Timothy 1:13, James 2:10, and Revelation 22:18-19**). So, if just sticking to everything God says and going no further or not falling short is legalism, I am guilty as charged (**Colossians 3:17**).