

## Are You “Missing Worship?”

Over time, words can change in meaning. This is true because the people using them change. Some changes- both in people and their words, are the natural product of advancing cultures and the societies within them. Other changes stem from circumstances that are foisted upon cultures, societies, and therefore on people and the words they use. The phrase “missing worship” was once primarily used synonymously with “*forsaking our own assembling together*” (cf. Hebrews 10:25). In that way and with that context, the phrase indicated a *deliberate choice to absent oneself* from the “worship service” of the local church- usually, *repeatedly*. Whether we agree(d) with the phraseology, or even with the propriety of its application, we knew what “missing worship” meant, or at least what the user meant by it. But...

“Missing worship” has come to have an altogether different meaning lately. Rather than implying negligence, it now most-often signifies one who *longs for collective worship, craves fellowship with beloved brethren, and thirsts for mutual edification* as a part of NT worship on the congregational level. It’s the same words as before, but with a dramatically different meaning.

So, are you “missing worship” in this new, changed way? If not, then perhaps your congregation has continued to assemble together (the point is not to applaud or condemn- just admitting the possibility). However, if your congregation has not continued to meet together to worship as before, **and you’re not “missing worship,” then:**

- 1) You’re not right.** If “your” (used accommodatively) congregation is not assembling for worship, AND you’re **not missing** (as in *longing for, desiring, craving/thirsting*) its collective worship, fellowship, and mutual edification, then you haven’t been putting in or getting out what you should have from assembling. Please don’t misunderstand. The primary purpose for collective worship is to praise and honor God (cf. Hebrews 2:12; 13:15; *et al*), and to commemorate the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His Son (cf. 1Corinthians 11:23-34). But there are clearly secondary benefits that God intended for us to receive from *collectively* worshipping Him. For instance, in “*speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*” we are also “*teaching and admonishing one another,*” cf. Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. If you’re not “missing” collectively singing praises to God and encouraging your brethren in this way, you’re not right. Likewise, if you don’t long to assemble to hear, study, and learn God’s word together, or blend your hearts and minds with those of like precious faith in prayer together, or commune with Christ in partaking of His memorial feast together, you’re just not right. And sadly, because of such, even before all this “social distancing” came about, you weren’t receiving the tremendous benefits God intended you to receive from collective/congregational worship.
- 2) The fellowship of the church to which you belong is not right.** It is also possible that the congregation of which you are a member is not what it should be. Please (re)read Acts 2:44-47; 4:32. What a beautiful picture of fellowship; they were “*of one heart and soul*”! Love, peace, unity, and true fellowship prevailed. There was mutual care and provision, and mutual edification. They were “*praising God,*” but doing so in the right ways and for the right reasons also produced great “*gladness and sincerity of heart*” within them. If you’re not “missing” being with your congregation in these ways and to these ends, then perhaps the congregation just isn’t what it should be.

**3) Both you and the fellowship of the church to which you belong are not right.**

The two previous points are not mutually exclusive; both can be true.

So, if any or all the above are true, what is to be done? The answer is actually simple for both *individual* and *congregation/collective* worship: Worship God “*in spirit and in truth*,” John 4:23-24. This means doing *what* God said, *how* God said, and for the *reasons* God said. When we do so, He is praised and we are educated, edified, and uplifted. And if you don’t “miss worship” in these ways, something is definitely wrong!

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