

Are Evening Worship Services a Matter of Personal Preference for God's Children?

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Why God's People Should Be Attending Evening Worship Services

- **BECAUSE GOD IS WORTHY!** God is eminently worthy and is not pleased when his worship is preempted by a choice of lesser things. There is no better way for God's children to spend their time on the day he has chosen for us to "remember," "observe" and "keep holy" than in the house of the Lord on the Lord's Day, morning and evening.
- **BECAUSE OF THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE!** In Psalm 134 there is a call to worship and a benediction in the context of evening congregational services. The ministering Levites are encouraged in their all-night ministry in the temple as God's people leave after the evening service. In 1 Chronicles 9:33 we're told that there were musicians who played their instruments for worship both "day and night." In 1 Chronicles 23:24-32 we're given a description of the work of the Levites in worship. It says, "They were to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord. They were to do the same in the evening." In Acts 20:7 God's people were worshipping and celebrating the Lord's Supper late into the evening.
- **BECAUSE WE NEED IT!** Worship services accompanied by the preaching of the Word are a primary means of grace in which God ministers to the sincere heart a sanctifying work by the Holy Spirit. God's people need and ought to have a hunger for all the grace and spiritual growth they can obtain!
- **BECAUSE OTHER BELIEVERS NEED US!** God calls his children to "encourage" one another, and our presence in all worship services is a major way in which we fulfill this obligation. The proof is found in the heartfelt discouragement of believers when they see others absenting themselves.
- **BECAUSE OF OUR NATURAL TENDANCY TO SUBSTITUTE OUR OWN DESIRES!** Attendance at evening services aids us in avoiding the temptations of things forbidden by the Lord to be done on his day of rest, such as work, buying and selling, and participation in sports

(Isa. 58:13-14). These and other things are fine to do on the other six days, but not on the Lord's Day. The result in the lives of those who attend only morning services is that for all intent and purposes the Lord's Day for them is over at noon (adopting the curse of Roman Catholic tradition). And what follows is usually in direct disobedience of mandates for his creation ordinance.

- **BECAUSE OF THE DISASTEROUS RESULTS OF VIOLATING GODS LAW!** When the doors of the sheepfold are closed, the sheep, who are so weak and prone to go in the error of their way, are scattered and left to fill God's holy day on their own with their own ideas and inventions. The history of the church tells us this is disastrous. A half hour or so of weekly feeding from the Word of God—a tiny fraction of our waking hours—will not suffice for the needs of the hearts and minds of God's people and maintain them in their need to walk in the truth (3 John 1:3-4). The Lord repeatedly pronounces curses on Lord's Day violators (e.g., Ex. 31:13-17; Num. 15:32).
- **BECAUSE IT WAS MODELED FOR US!** Worship services today are generally not much more than an hour and the preaching approximately thirty minutes. That is not very much time given to what the Lord calls his children to do on a full day he has set aside for their remembrance and worship of him and his granting them a special blessing. It is the "Lord's Day"—from sunset to sunset—not just the morning. Our parents and grandparents, and the saints before them, knew it was necessary and delighted to be in morning and evening services. Do we need it any less? Or is there any excuse that our hearts fail to possess the spiritual desires they had? Were they at fault for their desire to be in God's presence to enjoy and worship him for more than one hour a week, the One in whose presence they and we will soon be for all eternity? Were they not biblical in crying out with the Psalmist, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God ... Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere"? (Ps. 84:1-2, 10). "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord' " (Ps. 122:1).
- **BECAUSE OF THE HISTORICAL TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH!** We are a Reformation church in the Calvinistic tradition, and it has been the judgment of the spiritual leaders of the church since the days of John Calvin that God's people are to be in worship at least twice on Sunday. Indeed, Calvin and many after him held worship services several times each Lord's Day. And the preaching was not the truncated version with its anemic diet so prevalent in many churches today. Even today, in parts of the world where there is an anti-Christian climate and it is more difficult to follow Christ, the hunger for God is so great that it is

common for the Lord's persecuted children to be in worship services for two to three hours twice a Sunday (Acts 20).

- **BECAUSE OF OUR NEED TO PREPARE FOR OUR ETERNAL VOCATION!** Scripture emphasizes the importance of the day for our preparation for our eternal home in glory. Think about it—soon you will leave this life, and you never know when! “This life is nothing but a vestibule”—John Calvin. How well are you prepared to go into God's presence? The Bible says heaven is our eternal “rest,” but it also tells us that we will serve the Lord Jesus Christ “both day and night in his temple.” How ready are you to serve in the heavenly sanctuary? It is God's design that our presence in the earthly one prepare us for our heavenly worship and service.
- **BECAUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF OUR WORLD!** Absence makes one a part of the broad spiritual decline of our day and the weakening of the church's witness to the world. The more the church doors are closed the greater the devil's victory to shut down the witness of Christ. What kind of a witness can we be when we gather for worship 1 in 168 hours a week?
- **BECAUSE WE SAID WE WANTED IT!** Members of many churches—both past and present—believing it to be of great importance, voted before the presence of God to call a minister with a stipulation that he was to lead two worship services, and prepare and deliver two sermons on the Lord's day, and then absented themselves from evening services. God will not look lightly on those who lack a desire to be in his presence during set times of worship called by his elders (Heb. 13:17). Our obligation is to be there and respond appropriately “at all times of public worship appointed by the elders.” Such times are “not carelessly or willfully to be neglected.”
- **BECAUSE OF THE PROMISED BENEFITS, REWARDS AND BLESSINGS OBTAINED THROUGH IT!**
 - In Psalm 65:4
 - All the blessings and comforts of the everlasting New Covenant.
 - In Psalm 92:13-14
 - We will be like a fruitful tree planted by the Lord, bearing the fruit of devotion and good works, even in old age.
 - In Isaiah 56
 - God will give us a “memorial and a name” in his holy house that will not be removed.
 - God will bring us to his holy mountain and give us joy in his house of prayer.
 - Our sacrifices and offerings will be accepted.

- In Isaiah 58
 - We will find great joy in the Lord.
 - God will cause us to “ride on the heights of the land” (a picture of a conqueror).
 - We will feast on the inheritance of the fathers of the faith.
- In Matthew 18:20
 - The Lord is present administering special grace with a spiritual work through the Word by his Spirit with our spirits.
- In Hebrews 10:25
 - We receive encouragement from fellow believers.
- In Acts 20:32
 - We receive “the Word of his grace” which “builds us up” and gives us “an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”

Sunday morning and evening services are times set aside by the Lord, who governs through his elders, in which we receive:

- A foretaste of glory
- Feeding by him from the Word of God, preparing us more and more for our eternal home
- Encouragement by the Holy Spirit, God’s promises and God’s people
- Enjoyment of the formal fellowship of God’s people in worship and sacrament
- Finding joy in worship and singing and receiving God’s benediction

Considering all the above, who among God’s children should not delight in evening worship?