
WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.

WHY DO WE HAVE CHURCH? Michael B. Beough
Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:37-42 February 15, 2009

There was a pastor who got to thinking about all the reasons people give for not attending church. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he was that he should quit attending *athletic events*. He came up with twelve reasons.

- Every time I go, they ask me for money.
- The people sitting around me don't always seem real friendly.
- The seats are often too hard and uncomfortable, and it's either too hot or too cold.
- The coach never calls on me.
- The referees make decisions that I don't like.
- I can always spot the hypocrites – they come only to see what others are wearing.
- Some games go into overtime, and I am late getting home.
- The band plays some numbers that I have never heard before.
- The games are scheduled when I have other things I need to do.
- My parents took me to too many games when I was growing up.
- Since I read a book on sports, I feel that I know more than the coaches.
- Its not somewhere I want to take my children because I want them to choose for themselves what sport they like best.

Why do we have church? That's a great question asked by one of our children. Eventually the question will morph into, "Why do I have to go to church?" We are calling this worship series "Answers to Tough Questions Children Ask," but this is one of the easiest questions to answer, provided we keep two things in mind.

First, we need to teach our children the meaning of the word "church." We use the word in a lot of different ways. We use it to refer to a building. "I'm going down to the church for a meeting." We use it to refer to what we do in the building. "I went to church today." We use it to refer to religious practice. "I am a church-goer." Actually, the Bible never uses the word "church" in any of these ways.

The word "church" means an assembly of people called together by God. When people experience the forgiving and saving love of God through Jesus Christ, they join with others to be the church. We assemble because God makes it happen.

When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 he was going to build his church on a rock, he wasn't talking about building a sanctuary with a steeple and stain-

glass windows. He was talking about assembling people in his name and for his purposes.

Look at what happened in Acts 2:37-42. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached a powerful sermon about Jesus Christ. And people responded. He didn't invite them to join the church, as if it were a club. He invited them to repent and invite Jesus into their hearts. That's what they did. They repented and were baptized, 3000 of them, and then they assembled as the church, devoting themselves "to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." They became the church as an outcome of their response to the love of God.

Here at SBPC we call it Worship Plus 2. We come together to worship the Lord of the universe, the One who created us and redeems us, and who promises life forever with Him. But we also come together to grow in our relationship with God and with one another and as disciples of Jesus Christ, and to share God's love with the world through missions and service.

Why do we have church? Why do we get together? Because God loves us and gave himself for us. If we are a part of the church for any other reason, our children will sniff it out. We will not fool them. They can spot phonies a mile off. If we give our children any other reason for being a part of the church, we might deprive them forever of God's way of blessing their lives.

This leads to the second thing to keep in mind. We need the church because it is here among God's people that God promises to bless us and grow us into mighty oaks of faith, hope, and love.

Now I know this does not always happen in places that go by the name church. I read some horrible stories online written by adults who will never enter a church again. They tell about abuse and meanness they experienced as children growing up in churches. Unfortunately, those churches still exist, but they are churches in name only. Just as there are Christians in name only, some of whom perpetrate such abuse.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us a clue to the true nature of the church. It is a group of people, redeemed by Christ, who provoke one another to love and good deeds, meeting together, and encouraging one another. Jesus once said, where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. The church as the assembled people of God is the one place where we can expect to meet up with Christ. It is the one place where we can expect to experience the powerful presence of God's Spirit to encourage us and provoke us to good deeds. Here is where God promises to be among us in a unique way.

Why do we have church? Because it is where God is, and where God is, there is abundant blessing.

You see, **I think we make two mistakes when trying to convince our children they need to go to church.**

We often resort to telling them they need to go to church to learn *about* God. That is true. Here at SBPC we provide ways for children to learn about God. But the reason we want them to be a part of church life is because we want them to know God, and to experience the forgiveness of Christ, and to receive the blessings God has for them. Because wherever we gather in the name of Jesus, God is there.

Sometimes we also resort to the entertainment factor. If we can convince them they will have fun, perhaps they won't mind going.

Now there is nothing wrong with having fun when we gather as the church of Jesus Christ. We laughed until we almost cried at choir rehearsal Wednesday night. It wouldn't do for me to divulge the substance of our good humor. Suffice it say it has to do with the song we are going to sing in a few moments.

Having fun is a good thing. But I hope we do not resort to entertainment religion as the carrot to get our children motivated for church. Not even that will always do the trick. It will not last long. My barber told me two years ago about the great church he was attending. His children just loved going because the church has a fantastic play area and the church had an entertaining children's church with clowns and all sorts of goings on. What he liked about the church was the softball team he was playing on. Guess what? They don't go to church anymore. The entertainment factor wore off. There are far more entertaining things to do than go to church even if it has a fantastic play area. You can eat only so much sugar before your body and spirit gag and sag.

Our children need to know that gathering with other Christians is what Christians do. And we do it because God loves us and gave himself for us. And because we expect to meet up with Christ and run smack dab into the Spirit of God. Those are good reasons for being a part of the church. It is why we have church.