

Why Should I Go Back to Church if I Can Just Watch the Sermon VIRTUALLY?

■ by Laura Goossens, MSW, LCSW



The age of COVID has provided incredible new opportunities to engage in church, ministries, and small groups through a virtual platform. This has opened many doors for people to get plugged into a local church who weren't able to physically make it to church before, and that is such a gift. Many of us have had to utilize online services at one point or another, and with them being so convenient and accessible, the question is, is it even necessary to make it back into a church building?

What if I Can't Physically Make It to Church Right Now?

Let me start by saying the purpose of this article isn't to make anyone feel guilty if they aren't able to make it back into a church building at this time. There are many reasons and personal situations where it might be best for you to continue being engaged in church in a virtual setting during the season of life you are in. Maybe you are physically unable to get there, have a loved one in cancer treatment and are concerned about giving them COVID, or are the caretaker for a spouse who needs 24-hour care. The Bible says that there will be different seasons of our life, and some of those seasons will keep us from physically being at church.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 says, "For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace."

What if I Can Make It to Church, But I Am in a Season of Life that Makes it More Difficult Too?

I have three kids; two of them are two-year-old twins, and I can't tell you how many times I have thought or said out loud, "What is the point of even going to church?" Maybe you have been in this scenario before: You get all your kids ready, pack them in the car, and bring them to church, only to find yourself hanging out in the nursery the entire service with a clingy, crying kid. When you go to church and never even make it into the service, you start to question your sanity for even trying. Yet maybe when you are at church, you bump into a friend who is hurting, and you are there to provide them with the encouragement they need in that specific moment. Maybe you have been carrying a burden all week, and the flood of tears come forth when someone asks how you are doing, and you are blessed with the support you need. Maybe you see a need that only you can fill. There are so many hidden reasons for church that have nothing to do with actually even making it into the service, even in our most inconvenient seasons of life.

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We Need Truth

We live in a world full of lies. We are bombarded by messages that are trying to persuade us from the truth. As strong as we think we are, we all need to be constantly hearing God's truth to combat the lies that Satan continues to sell us. "So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth" (1 John 1:6). Belonging to a church where you are hearing God's truth from the pulpit, from the fellow believers you fellowship with, and in every aspect of your church will help you continue to hold on to a strong foundation in your faith that won't be moved.

We Need Accountability

We are all sinners; all of us need accountability to overcome the sin in our lives that tries to keep us from giving God glory. The beauty of the gospel is that, as believers, we are all completely dependent on the beautiful grace God richly provided when Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We are fallen and dependent on each other to continue to help pick one another up. "A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12). There have been so many times in my life I have been in complete denial of the sin I was in, and it took another believer to point it out in order for me to see it. Denial is so easy to fall into; we all have blind spots and need each other to continue to speak truth in love to one another to help us grow.

We Need Fellowship

The pandemic opened my eyes to my deep need for fellowship in a way that I never truly understood before. During the pandemic, my family and I hadn't been physically at church for about a whole year because we were trying to keep our parents, who watched our kids on a weekly basis, as safe as possible. I am sure there are many different opinions on whether this was the right or wrong decision to make. In any case, it was an incredible learning experience as we saw how much being away from other believers negatively affected our entire family. There was an incredible ache for the church community, even in my 6-year-old who was also able to articulate this to us. We ended up returning to church again, and being among a community of believers made such a difference in our lives. We truly need each other.



There are many aspects of church that can't be created in an online environment. There is truly nothing like being side-by-side, corporately worshipping a God who uniquely created each of us to fit together perfectly in unity. There is beauty in physically sharing our burdens and creating the opportunity to speak truth into each other's lives. The early church shared life together in a beautiful unity that drew others in, and it will continue to do so as we strive to continue to meet together in this same way. "They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved" (Acts 2:46-47). ■

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