

## Missing the Assembly 3-15-20

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.* Hebrews 10:24-25

What are the expectations of membership at the Sunset congregation? First, we expect that members will join in the assembly of the saints that is centered on communion (1 Cor. 11:18-20). Hebrews 10:25-26 make it clear that forsaking that assembly is a willful sin. Second, we ask that members participate in edification, meaning that they join us for studying the word of God. In doing this they are ringing encouragement (1 Thes. 5:11). While the expectation of their presence is less than that of the assembly, it is still sinful to ignore the command to edify and study. Finally, along the same lines, we ask that members participate in personal engagement, which is to say our times when we gather House to house (Acts 2:46).

Sometimes we have a question about times when we are not able to assemble together, particularly the assembly of worship. When is missing the Assembly forsaking it? First, we might consider that Jesus taught in Luke 14:5 that sometimes we simply cannot accomplish the purpose of God. We presume that in Acts 27:33 Paul was unable to assemble with Saints, and perhaps even his years in prison might have been a time he could not assemble. We conclude then that missing because of circumstances, or (unavoidable) work, or sickness (having, giving, or even just hurting) is not forsaking the assembly.

What then is forsaking? That word is used in a marriage vow when someone promises to “forsake all others” for the person they marry. That means they turn their back on others. Jesus used that term on the cross when He declared “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” Forsake means to turn away by choice of will. It is contrasted with the command to “seek first the kingdom of God”; if we choose to be elsewhere, is it first?

We understand now that there are legitimate times we might not be able to assemble together. But we also need to consider the issue if we constantly have reasons not to attend. In other words, what if our “cow” is constantly falling in the ditch? At some point, this might become an issue too. If your cow keeps falling in the ditch: put up a fence; fill in the ditch; or ditch the cow. The consequences are not worth it; even legitimate absence hurts you and your brethren.

All of us will need to miss the assembly at times; these are just the circumstance of life. Sometimes we don’t really need to miss it, and we need to judge ourselves wisely on this. Ultimately this comes down to the need to esteem our time with God and to esteem our time with each other.