

# I Don't Have to Go to Church

by Anton Bosch

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*Anton Bosch argues that active participation in a local church is essential for true Christian living and spiritual growth.*

**Scripture:** Acts 2:47, Romans 12:4, Ephesians 4:16, Hebrews 10:25

**Topics:** "Church Membership", "Body Of Christ"

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## Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the importance of actively participating in a local church as a fundamental aspect of being a true born-again believer. He challenges the common notion that attending church is optional for Christians, highlighting that being part of the 'Universal Church' or sporadically attending services does not fulfill the biblical mandate of being part of a local body of believers. Bosch underscores the significance of believers functioning within the context of a church body to reach their full potential and receive spiritual nourishment, drawing parallels to the interconnectedness of body parts in the human anatomy.

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## Transcript

Many people think that going to church is an optional for Christians. Really?

Yes, the church is not a building but a body of believers. And you could argue that we don't go to church but we are the church. No matter how you use or abuse the terms, the fact is that 77 million people in America never attend any kind of church gathering, except for weddings and funerals. Almost half (43%) of all people who claim to be Christians in America do not regularly attend meetings of any church. (According to Barna Research Group.) Personally, I think the reality is much worse than these already shocking statistics.

There is an increasing trend amongst those who claim to be Christians to not be actively involved in a local church. Many reasons and excuses are offered for this tendency. Most of the reasons point to problems with the churches rather than with the individual. I am sure if you are one of those who don't attend church, that you have many fingers pointed at the church, its members and its leaders. The truth, however, is that by far the biggest reason why people don't attend church has to do with the spiritual condition of the individual, rather than the body.

So, what about the statement that you don't have to go to church in order to be a Christian? In part it is true that being part of a local body is not essential for salvation. And I agree, many churches are filled with

people who are not truly born again. But if you are a truly born-again believer then being part of a local body of believers is not an option. And don't tell me there is no scripture for this statement because there is.

Let me further define that being part of the "Universal Church", watching church on TV or the internet, having breakfast with a buddy or even going to a church from time to time does not qualify as being part of a local church. Being part of a local church means attending every one of the meetings and activities of that church, supporting it with your prayers and money and fulfilling some ministry or service in that church. If you attend one out of four meetings a week you may claim to go to church but you are certainly not part of that church.

Acts 2:47 says: "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved". Notice that it specifically mentions that these people were added to the church. It does not say they got saved, but their being saved was manifest in their addition to the assembly. There is no doubt that anyone who lived in Jerusalem and who claimed to be a Christian, but who was not part of the church would have been disowned by the church. If you got saved, you were added to the church. That is the way it was then and that is the way it should be today. Its really quite simple.

Excommunication is the most severe form of discipline that the church can impose on anyone. It is a painful and shameful thing to be excommunicated or shunned. Yet millions of Christians choose to excommunicate themselves from the church. There has to be something wrong with the person who chooses to impose on himself this most reprehensible form of a censure. Oh, I know they think they have excommunicated the church, but that is simply not true. A leg can be amputated but a body cannot be amputated.

As a Christian you are designed to function within the context of a body. Just as no part of the human body has any right to existence outside of that body - we cannot function or fulfill our calling outside of the body. Can you image someone cutting their arm off and then wiring it up and mounting it so it can sit on the mantle and wave at people in the room? I am not exaggerating - the Christian who thinks he can function outside the church is as dysfunctional as that arm on the mantle. You may be doing some things but they are simply the nervous twitches of a severed limb.

Only in the context of the body can each member realize their full potential. My thumbs are very important to me and they are very skilled to perform many tasks. But my thumbs are useless without the help of other fingers. Try to pick something up or holding something by just using your thumb. Thumbs only become useful when used together with the other fingers of the hand. You may be able to do a few things for the Lord on your own, but you will never be able to reach a fraction of your potential until you learn to work with others.

But forget about reaching your full potential, you will not even be able to survive for long outside the body of Christ. A human body part can survive for a few hours once it has been cut from the body, but it will not survive for long. In the same way believers may be able to survive for a while without fellowship but without the flow of life that comes from the rest of the Body of Christ - they will eventually die. Now before you respond that we are connected to Christ and that the life flows from Him, allow me to ask this question: If the Lord's design is for believers to receive life and nutrition through the body of Christ (which it is), then what makes you so special that the Almighty should make an exception for you? No, if you reject His provision through the church, then there is no way He is going to make some special provision

for you. He fed Israel through the manna and if you did not like the manna, you could starve but He was not going to deliver steak and fries to your door.

The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, decreed that most of the needs of the individual believer are met through the life of the local church. The church can never take His place and our relationship should never be with the church and not with Him. But someone who is married to a spouse is married to the whole person, not just the head. You cannot walk around with your lover's head and claim to have a relationship with them. Yet many Christians want a relationship with the Head of the body and yet reject the rest of the body - that is just ludicrous.

Now I know there are some readers whose response is that I have not quoted many verses. Well, there is a whole chapter on this - 1Corinthians 12. Read it and remember that this chapter is about the local church not the denomination or "universal church". Members belong to, live and function in the context of local bodies.

So you want to spend eternity in heaven? Maybe you have forgotten that eternity will be with other Christians - the same ones to whom you are not willing to give the time of day here on earth.

(To be continued)

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