

**Fake News About Church**  
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We hear a lot these days about fake news. We hear so much about it that it's getting hard to know what the true news is.

Fake news ranges from satire or parody, which is intended to be funny, to misleading news, to totally false fabricated news designed to deceive. Fake news has exploded with the increase in social media where false stories can spread to millions of people.

It seems like fake news is a new phenomenon, but it's been around for a long time. Actually, it's been around from the beginning of the world. The fake news I'm talking about is deception spread by the deceiver! We have an enemy named Satan and here's what Jesus said about him in John 8:44:

*He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

We are beginning a new sermon series today entitled: Fake News – Replacing Lies with the Truth. In this series we will look at the lies the enemy spreads – Fake News about God – the Bible – Salvation – Heaven and Hell.

Since this is Back to Church Sunday – today I'm speaking on Fake News About Church. Satan knows the power of church – that's why he works so hard to keep you away. That's why it is so easy to hit the snooze button on Sunday morning when the alarm sounds, roll over and go back to sleep. Maybe you had every intention of going to church...even had your clothes laid out, but your sleepy side wins.

So why should we make church a priority?

You go to school to get an education so you can make a living.

You go to work to make money so you can pay the bills.

You go to the gym for exercise and better health.

But why go to church?

If you've ever found yourself wondering about that little question, you're not alone. Surveys tell us that as many as 79% of Americans identify themselves as Christians, yet only 20% of Americans attend church regularly.

That shows you how hard Satan is working to keep people from church! He gets people to use any excuse for not attending church.

Here's some real excuses people have given for not attending church:

- The pastor stays in the Bible too much.

- We got burned out at church and have been taking a break the past seven years.
- I hear people preach on Facebook all week.
- Jesus never went to church.
- One word....NASCAR!
- Both of my girlfriends attend church there.
- I was up too late arguing with heathens on Twitter.
- I'm too hung over to get out of bed that early on Sunday
- I have been feeling discouraged lately

The main lie the enemy tells about church is this:

### 1- **Church is not for you**

It might be for other people, but not for you. You don't need it. In other words, you don't belong in church. Nothing could be further from the truth! The church is God's place for you to belong!

While your relationship to Christ is personal, God never intends it to be private! Church is all about connecting with God and other people. A Christian who is disconnected from church is like:

a football player without a team;  
 a soldier without an army;  
 a tuba player without an orchestra.  
 a child without a family.

God does not want his children growing up in isolation from each other, so He created a spiritual family on earth for us. That family is the church. Ephesians 3:14-15 says:

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

We are a family so we help each other in times of need. Galatians 6:10 says:

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Being a member of the church is not like being a member of Costco! At Costco you can show up or not show up. You can pick and choose what you want. You don't have to think of anyone but yourself. But in the Bible – being a member of the church meant being part of a family. It also means being part of a living body. Romans 12:4-5 says:

*Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

In order for members of your physical body to fulfill their purpose, they must be connected to your body. If an organ is somehow severed from the body, it will shrivel and die. It cannot exist on its own, and neither can you.

If you get cut off from the lifeblood of a local church, your spiritual life will wither and die. That is why the first symptom of spiritual decline is usually inconsistent attendance at worship services. Whenever we become careless about fellowship, everything else begins to slide, too.

That's because the church is a place to become who God wants us to be. People gather here on Sundays and throughout the week to learn the word of God. We don't do that so that we can become Bible scholars. We do that because the Word of God changes our lives. It makes us better people so that we can help other people.

The Christian life was never intended to be lived outside of a community of other believers! There are many people who believe that they can be mature Christians and follow Jesus apart from the church all by themselves. But that is impossible! Most New Testament books were written to churches – like the churches in Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Galatia and Rome. Those books were written to show how the Christian life was meant to be lived in community, not in isolation! In fact, there are many biblical commands you cannot obey without being part of a church.

I know we hear a lot about what's wrong with the church, but I want to talk about what's right with the church. You see, church is God's idea and anything that is a God idea is a good idea!

A Gallup Poll called "Just Why Do Americans Attend Church" revealed the reasons people do and don't attend church. We'll talk about why people don't attend church later, but first, research shows that people attend church for spiritual growth and guidance, to worship God, and to fellowship with other people. It's interesting to note that those are the main functions of the church. Acts 2:42-47 tells us what the first church was like in the book of Acts.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

This is what church is supposed to be like. It's a group of people who live life together. They're not there just for themselves, but for others. They love and accept each other and meet each other's needs.

I know the church is not perfect. But I could talk for hours about how the church has been responsible for many advances in science, government, business, education, medicine and the arts. In fact, the Christian church has made more changes on earth for good than any other movement or people group in history! But I want to make it more personal today.

I've been in church all my life. And I wasn't always a pastor. But the church has always been there for me.

It was at church that I learned how to succeed in life.

It was at church that I learned how to have a marriage that has lasted over 43 years.

It was at church I learned how to manage my finances.

People in the church have been there for me when I needed them.

The church has helped me when I've had financial needs.

The church has counseled me when I needed advice.

The church has rejoiced with us when we were happy.

The church has grieved with us when we were sad.

God has blessed me and my family through His family – the church.

But – you might say that's okay for me, but not for you. So, I want to give you some little known facts that research had shown about the benefits of church. For instance, research conducted at three universities shows that those who attend church regularly live an average of seven years longer than those who do not attend church. This gap is as great as that between non-smokers and those who smoke a pack of cigarettes a day. That's amazing!

And longer life is not the only benefit of church. I found an article that summarized the results of over 100 studies on the impact of church on people's lives. The research show that – in addition to longer life - religious faith and church attendance lead to:

- Higher levels of marital happiness and stability;
- Greater educational aspirations and attainment;
- Higher levels of good work habits;
- Higher levels of self-control, self-esteem, and coping skills; and
- Higher levels of community support for those in need.

The evidence further demonstrates that religious belief and church attendance are also associated with:

- Lower divorce rates and out-of-wedlock births;
- Less abuse of alcohol and drugs;
- Lower rates of depression and suicide;
- Lower levels of violent crime; and less domestic violence.

All of this supports what the Bible said all along: life is better when you're part of a church.

Now – I want to look at some other lies people believe about church. In addition to believing church is not for them, here are some other misbeliefs people have about church.

## **2 – Church is boring**

My answer to that is that some churches are boring. But there are many different kinds of churches, with different styles of music and preaching. So – if the church you've attended has bored you – try different kinds of churches until you find one you like.

I've been in boring churches before. But I kept looking until I found a church that is not boring to me. Obviously, I don't think Grace Fellowship Church is boring – but some people might. I go to both services every week – and I can tell you no two services are ever the same.

We expect God to show up and God is never boring! When God shows up – even unbelievers know it! 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 says:

*If an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

That's what we expect to happen here. But if you're bored here, keep searching until you find a church that doesn't bore you. We've help lots of people find the right church for them – and we'd love to help you find the church that is just right for you.

## **3 – You shouldn't go to church because people there are hypocrites**

The truth is – there are hypocrites in the church. That's why I point out on a regular basis that none of us are perfect. We all have problems, issues and sins we still need to overcome. The church is not for perfect people. Why? Because there are none! The church is a group of imperfect people worshipping God who is the only One who is perfect!

## **4 – All the church wants is my money**

I hate to be pressured to give. So we don't pressure – but we do teach the Bible. Did you know that Jesus taught about money more than He taught about almost anything else – including prayer and faith? And the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7:

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

I think that to have balance you must teach both of these verses. You must teach people to give what the Lord leads them to give. But secondly – we would be out of balance if we did not teach the truth of sowing and reaping. So what we do at GFC is teach the truth and present opportunities to give. We do not pressure. We just ask people to pray and do what God tells them to do.

### **5 – I don't fit at church because church people are different from me**

One of the great things about GFC is that we are a diverse church. We are made up of people of all ages, from different ethnic groups, different education levels, and different economic backgrounds. We believe churches should be a reflection of their community and a reflection of heaven. And the Bible says in Revelation 5:9 that the people in heaven sing a song to Jesus that says:

*You have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

Heaven is composed of people of all types and so is Grace Fellowship Church.

### **6 - Church is unnecessary because I can worship on my own**

Many people say, "I don't need to go to church to worship. I can worship alone. I can worship when I'm in the woods hunting or on the golf course golfing. Yes – that's technically true – you can. But even if people are worshipping at home or on the golf course, they are missing out on the greater power of worshipping together.

The truth is you can pray, worship and read your Bible on your own – AND YOU SHOULD! But you should also pray, worship and read the Bible with other believers. They are different and they are both necessary.

Yes, we can meet with God alone at home or at the lake – but there is something different about meeting with Him with other believers. You see, Jesus lives in every single believer. We have His presence in our lives all the time. But He said in Matthew 18:20:

*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

Evidently God shows up one way in personal quiet times and in a different way in the church service. You see, one believer has power, but there is greater power in unity. That's why Ecclesiastes 4:9 says *Two are better than one.*

You can pray alone – and you should - but there is power in the prayer of agreement. Jesus said in Matthew 18:19:

*If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.*

There are some things we only receive when we pray together. Two are better than one!

You can do spiritual warfare alone – and you should - but there is greater power when we war together. Leviticus 26:8 says:

*Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.*

We have greater victories when we fight together. When I'm in a spiritual battle – I need you to fight with me! Two are better than one!

I want to encourage you to keep on worshipping at home or at the lake or at the golf course. But don't give up worshipping with God's family. Hebrews 10:25 says:

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

### **7 – I wouldn't be welcome at church because of the bad things I've done**

Satan uses that lie to keep people from coming to church, but nothing could be further from the truth! 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 gives a long list of sins like adultery, idolatry, sexual sins, greed, and theft. Then it says:

*Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

We are not deceived. We know what we were before we met Jesus and we know what we would be without Him. We could tell you countless stories of how Jesus has changed our lives. We are really sorry if the church has hurt you or let you down in any way. And we want to invite you back. Church is a place where you belong.

But, before you join a church, you need to join Christ. If you've never given your life to Him, you can do that right now. Or if you've gotten away from God, you can get back right now.

The real focus of questions about the truth of Christian faith is not the church – it's Jesus Christ Himself.

No matter what imperfections you may find in the church – Jesus Himself is perfect!

No matter what failures we may find in Christians, Jesus Himself never failed.

No matter how Christians may have hurt you, Jesus will never hurt you.

I'm not asking you to accept Christians; I'm asking you to accept Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

It's amazing that even though we have made big messes with our lives, Jesus can clean us up and give us a brand new start! This is one of the greatest miracles of all. John 3:16 says:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

We are here today as the church – the family of God – to let you know that God loves you so much that He gave His only son to die for you. If you invite Him into your life, it will change your world forever!