




Why should I attend
Church?



The “Spiritual But Not Religious” Epidemic

- ▶ Many of the Millennial and Gen Z generations in all religions are not actively participating in church services and activities.
- ▶ We are not immune... many Latter Day Saint Young Single Adults are following this pattern.
- ▶ We need to become better at explaining in ways that connect with them the reasons that church attendance is a critical part of their eternal journey.



Teacher and Leader Assignment on “Why should I attend Church?”

- ▶ Study in depth the material and resources provided today
- ▶ Add your own materials and ideas
- ▶ Elders, Relief Society, Young Men, and Young Women
 - ▶ Schedule a lesson sometime in the future that focuses on presenting the materials and ideas presented today as well as any additional inspiration you receive.
 - ▶ For adults, the goal is to provide ideas and materials that they can use in discussions with their loved ones about why church attendance is an important element in their life.
 - ▶ For the Youth, the lesson should focus on trying to reach them in ways that will help them be committed to being active members throughout their lives.
- ▶ Sunday School Teachers
 - ▶ Find ways to incorporate elements of the ideas presented today regularly into your already scheduled lessons.
 - ▶ Discussion of why church activity is important should be a regular and natural part of our lessons.

Resources to Study

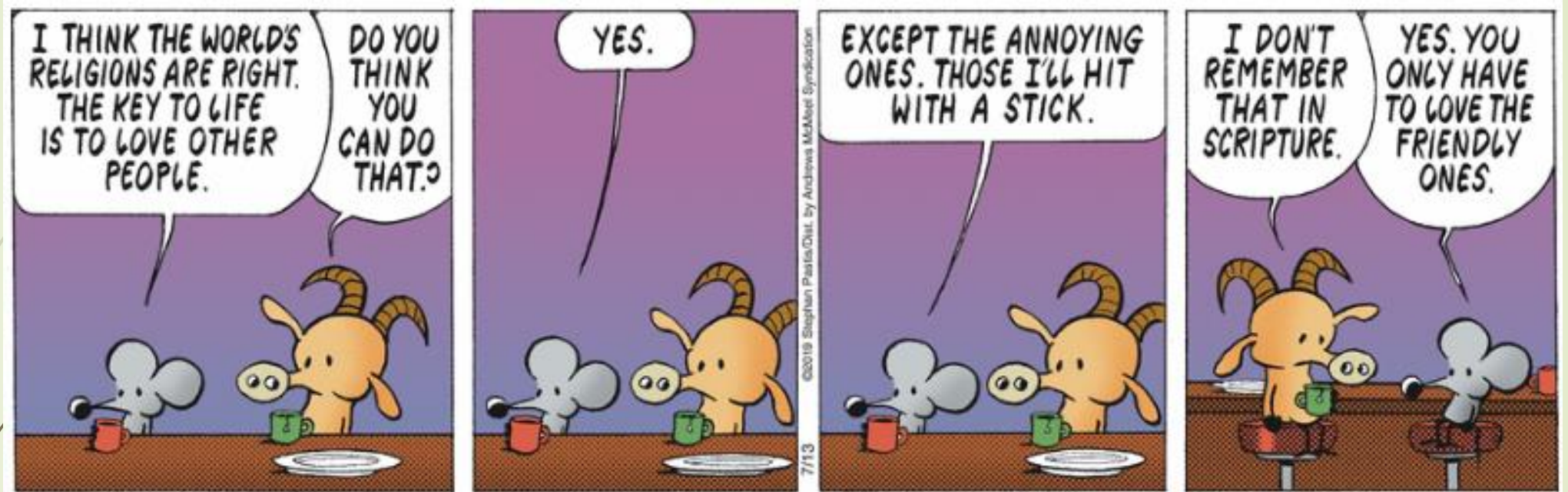
- ▶ The Role and Function of the Church: Chapter 3 of The Crucible of Doubt by Terryl and Fiona Givens
 - ▶ http://www.2understandlatterdaysaints.com/documents/Scholarly/The_Role_and_Function_of_the_Church.pdf
- ▶ Why the Church: Elder Christofferson Oct 2015
 - ▶ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2015/10/why-the-church?lang=eng>
- ▶ The Path of Redemption - 1965 (by Chauncey Riddle, BYU Professor of Philosophy)
 - ▶ http://www.2understandlatterdaysaints.com/documents/Other_Topics/Path_of_Redemption.pdf
- ▶ **Converted Unto the Lord: Elder David Bednar Oct 2012 Conf**
 - ▶ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2012/10/converted-onto-the-lord?lang=eng>
- ▶ Your four minutes: Elder Gary Stevenson Apr 2014 Conf
 - ▶ <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/04/your-four-minutes?lang=eng>
- ▶ This Presentation:
 - ▶ http://www.2understandlatterdaysaints.com/k11ward/Why_Should_I_Attend_Church.pdf
 - ▶ http://www.2understandlatterdaysaints.com/k11ward/Why_Should_I_Attend_Church.pptx




The Role and Function of the Church
(Chapter 3 of the Crucible of Doubt)
(Highlights)

- ➔ Community
- ➔ Ordinances (Sacrament)
- ➔ Opportunities to offer Sacrifices

Community




- How can we learn to love others (friendly and unfriendly) if we choose not to associate with them?



For we without them cannot be made perfect;
neither can they without us be made perfect.

D&C 128:18

- The above verse is about salvation for the dead, but it also perfectly applies to an individual's association with other members in the body of Christ.
- Salvation is on an individual basis, but the process of sanctification that leads to individual exaltation requires the learning and growing experiences that can only come from being an active part of a community of believers.
- If the members of the congregation were perfect, it would frustrate the designs of our heavenly father in allowing the interactions of imperfect people to be an agent of change in each others lives to help them learn and grow towards perfection.



“And that same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy.”

D&C 130:2

- “The Song of Eternal Life is not a solo” –John W. Welch
- “God is God by virtue of the perfection of the *relationships* He has founded and preserved. He has “set his heart” upon us, “doeth not anything save it be for [our] benefit,” weeps over our suffering in sin, and makes it His personal work and glory to bring about our exaltation. Clearly, heaven is a complete immersion—a full engagement and participation in a web of eternal, familial bonds of love and affection.”




A Ward Family

- ▶ “Like the family into which one is born, wards become the inescapable condition of a Mormon’s social and spiritual life. Just as, ironically, siblings forge fiercer bonds of loyalty and love to those with whom they never freely chose to associate, so does the arbitrariness of ward boundaries create a virtual inevitability about the ward’s cohesion. Congregations and their bishops do not audition for new adherents’ willful association. They are instantaneously designated a new move-in’s adoptive family, without the member’s right of dissent or appeal.”


A Ward Family's imperfections are key to our personal progress

- ▶ “Although not all family relations are idyllic, most are remarkably strong and a primary source for the individual's identity. Surely that is, in part, a function of the cost individuals pay to make a relationship work. Love is a product of what we put into a relationship. We love our families because of how much we have invested in them, how many times we fought, argued, simmered, and stewed but were forced back to the negotiating table by an unavoidable proximity and by a connection that transcended personal choice. We love that irritating brother and that infuriating sister because we couldn't simply walk away in a moment of frustration. We had to submit to the hard schooling of love because we couldn't transfer to another class with siblings more to our taste.”
- ▶ “As the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer realized, “cheap grace is the mortal enemy of the church,” and one version of cheap grace is “baptism without the discipline of community.” ”



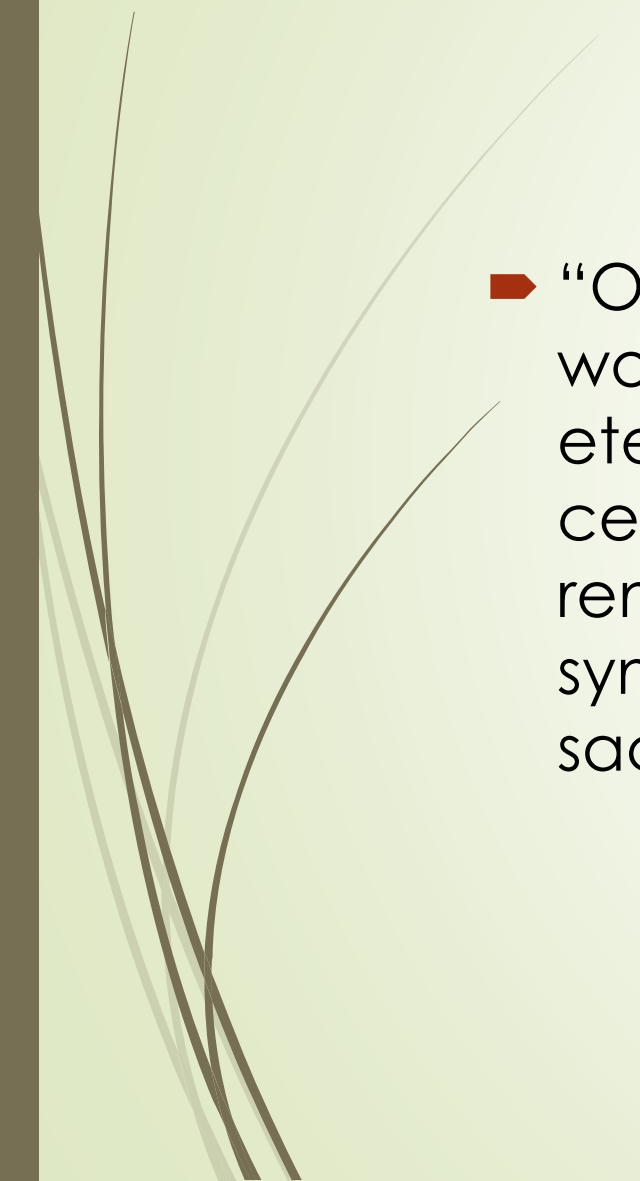
He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Matt 10:39

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- ▶ If we approach church attendance in terms of what we get out of it, we won't get much out of it.
 - ▶ If we approach church activity in terms of what we are willing to give, we will receive more than we can imagine.




Sacrament

- ▶ “On the occasion of the Last Supper, and knowing He would not remain in person to shepherd His disciples to eternal life, Jesus instituted a practice to keep them centered and mindful of their faith’s core. “This do in remembrance of me,” He said in consecrating the symbols of His own broken and bleeding body, sacrificed on our behalf.”
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Unity, Sanctification & Eternal Progress

- ▶ “Then praying for His disciples, He indicated precisely what His hope was for them in His absence. He prayed for their unity (“**that they may be one, even as we are**”), their sanctification (“**sanctify them through thy truth**”), and their perfection (“**that they may be made perfect**”). (John 17:11,17,23)
 - ▶ How can we strive to fulfill Christ’s desire for us to become “one” with fellow believers, if we are avoiding religiously associating with them?
- ▶ “Problems enter into our understanding of the Church when we divorce the first part of Christ’s model of true religion, the Lord’s Supper, from the second part, the effects it should generate.”
- ▶ “The power to **unite**, to **sanctify**, and to **perfect**, in other words, is rooted in Christ’s **sacrifice** and its **emulation by His disciples.**”



Religious Activity allows Christ's Disciples to strive to become one by emulating His sacrifice, love, and Service


- ▶ “To put this more simply, the purpose for which we go to church should be to reenact, in microcosm, the motivations and objectives that Jesus had in laying down His life for us. By coming together in community, serving and ministering to each other, sacrificing selflessly and loving unfailingly, we grow united, sanctified, and perfected in the family of Christ.”

Atonement the Focus of Sunday Worship

- “As the moral lesson without parallel and the basis of our own salvation and the world’s hope, the Atonement fittingly serves as the focal point of our Sunday worship. Most of us get this, if only vaguely. We know that the main purpose of Sabbath observance is to partake of the Lord’s Supper. But we sometimes grow frustrated with all the peripherals. Lessons and talks are to some Mormons what cafeteria food is to teenagers—not just in the way they can be bland and boring, but in the way that they sometimes bring us together in mutual griping rather than mutual edification.”

True Worship

- “But what if we saw lessons and talks as connections to the sacrament rather than as unrelated secondary activities? What if we saw them as opportunities to bear with one another in all our infirmities and ineptitude? What if we saw the mediocre talk, the overbearing counselor, the lesson read straight from the manual, as a lay member’s equivalent of the widow’s mite? A humble offering, perhaps, but one to be measured in terms of the capacity of the giver rather than in the value received. And if the effort itself is negligible—well, then the gift is the opportunity given us to exercise patience and mercy. If that sounds too idealistic, if we insist on imposing a higher standard on our co-worshippers, if we insist on measuring our worship service in terms of what we “get out of” the meeting, then perhaps we have erred in our understanding of worship.”

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- “The first time the word *worship* appears in the King James Version of the Old Testament, it appears with appalling import. “Abide ye here,” Abraham tells his servant, while “I and the lad will go yonder and worship.” The terrible offering of his son’s life is what the Bible’s first instance of “worship” portends. In the New Testament, the word *worship* first appears again in conjunction with a costly offering. It is used in reference to the wise men, who “worshipped” the Christ child by “open[ing] their treasures” and “present[ing] unto him gifts.” “
 - **“Worship, then, is about what we are prepared to relinquish—what we give up at personal cost.”**
 - “When, in the Old Testament, King David sins against God, the prophet Gad tells him to offer a sacrifice by way of reconciliation. Hearing of this, a well-intentioned King Araunah offers to ease David’s burden by providing both the site for the altar and the sacrificial oxen. David reproves him, asking, how can “I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing”? **Abraham, the wise men, and King David understood that in true worship, we approach the Divine with the desire to offer treasures and gifts, not to seek them.**”

Church Activity is like a marriage relationship

Marriage

- Husband and wife make promises that result in their continued involvement with each other.
- Each party in a marriage get out of the relationship what they are willing to put into it.
- Focusing on the negative in our marriage partner leads to unhappiness. Minimizing the negative and amplifying the positive (rose color glasses) leads to happiness.
- The most successful marriages do not focus on changing the other party. They focus on changing themselves. If they wait for the other party to change before changing themselves, they will likely be waiting forever.

Church Activity

- Members make promises in Baptism (and later in the Temple) to enter into a relationship with Christ and be fully involved in His earthly kingdom.
- Members get out of church activity what they are willing to put into it.
- Minimizing the flaws and amplifying the strengths of our fellow worshippers leads to greater unity and happiness.
- Allowing the Lord to change us through our church attendance leads to true progress. Focusing on how the congregation needs to change before we will be willing to participate will likely leave us waiting forever.

Feed My Sheep

- When the Savior asked Peter: “Lovest thou Me”, and Peter responded in the affirmative, Christ did not say: “Then Peter, demonstrate that love by spending time at home meditating, praying, and reading scriptures, or finding yourself in the mountains.”
- He said: *Feed My Sheep, Feed My Lambs, Feed My Sheep.* (John 21:16-17)
- In other words, be with them, interact with them, serve them, teach them, learn from them, rejoice with them, cry with them, put yourself in the vulnerable situation where you can be aggravated, frustrated, and hurt by them, but most importantly, strive to love them.

Church Organization: Logic Flow

Has God
Established a
Pattern


- Moses 6: 22, 23
- Moses 7: 7, 10-12, 18
- Ephesians 2:20
- Luke 10: 1
- Matthew 4: 18 -19

What is the
purpose of the
pattern

- Establish Zion
- Can Zion be established without a formal organization?
- Can Zion be established without the people be bound by covenant?

Does the
pattern apply
today

- This Question must be answered



Church Organization Patterns

- ▶ Beginning with Adam, the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached, and the essential ordinances of salvation, such as baptism, were administered through a family-based priesthood order...
 - ▶ D&C 84: 6-14
 - ▶ Moses 6: 22-23
- ▶ As societies grew more complex than simply extended families, God also called other prophets, messengers, and teachers. In Moses's time, we read of a more formal structure, including elders, priests, and judges...
- ▶ Then, in the meridian of time, Jesus organized His work in such a way that the gospel could be established simultaneously in multiple nations and among diverse peoples...
 - ▶ Ephesians 2:20



Purpose of the Church

- ▶ How does His Church accomplish the Lord's purposes? It is important to recognize that **God's ultimate purpose is our progress.** His desire is that we continue "from grace to grace, until [we receive] a fulness" of all He can give. *That requires more than simply being nice or feeling spiritual. It requires faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism of water and of the Spirit, and enduring in faith to the end. **One cannot fully achieve this in isolation,** so a major reason the Lord has a church is to create a community of Saints that will sustain one another in the "strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life."*
- ▶ D&C 97: 21. Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion—the pure in heart; therefore, let Zion rejoice...
- ▶ Moses 7: 18. And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.
- ▶ D&C 105: 5. And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself...
- ▶ Moses 7: 23. And after that Zion was taken up into heaven...



2 Components of Salvation

Personal

- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Repentance
- ▶ Baptism
- ▶ Obedience
- ▶ Meek
- ▶ Humble
- ▶ Pure in Heart
- ▶ and on, and on, and on...

Communal

- ▶ Definition: shared by all members of a community
- ▶ Therefore shall man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.
- ▶ Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.
- ▶ ... Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

... One cannot fully achieve this in isolation



Salvation and Baseball

- ▶ In many ways baseball is an individual battle:
 - ▶ You pitch and I hit. If I hit the ball I win, if I miss you win
 - ▶ You hit the ball I field it. If I catch it, I win. If not, you win
- ▶ In many ways baseball is a team battle
 - ▶ I field the ball and throw it to you, and you must catch it.
 - ▶ I get on base, you must hit me in
 - ▶ I cannot cover every position on the field; I need teammates that hold up their end of the bargain
- ▶ Salvation is about becoming a Celestial person
 - ▶ Some battles seem personal
 - ▶ All battles require Zion



Is the church necessary today?

