

Why Should I Go to Church

Genesis 3; Hebrews 10:25

Brett Clemmer

Good morning, gentlemen. It's great to see you this morning. Before we get started I want to bring your attention to a flyer on your tables. Man in the Mirror is having our annual summit called Fuel. I want to extend an invitation to you. It is on February 28-March 2. We have some great speakers this year including Tony Evans. He has a great book out now called *Kingdom Men*. He is a senior pastor and really believes in the importance of discipling men in the church. He is Pastor Bob Coy from South Florida who built Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale. He is a dynamic speaker. You can get more information at mimsummit.org.

I encourage you to come. There will be workshops and programs. You can bring your wife, and guys from your church. There will be a banquet on Thursday night and speaking events all day Friday. It ends just before lunch Saturday. Think about bringing some guys you know, or bring your wife. Hopefully we will see you at the end of February.

It is great to be here this morning. We have an interesting topic this morning. We are going to talk about why should I go to church? We sent the reminder out yesterday and I already got an email back that says it sounds legalistic – why should I go to church? I want you to know I am not here to tell you this morning that God says that if you want to go to heaven you have to go to church.

I don't want to talk to you from a legalistic standpoint of why it is your obligation to go to church. That is not my purpose at all today. Listen to my inflection – really, why SHOULD I? I'm a guy – you tell me to do something, why SHOULD I? We are guys, that is how we think. You have to do this – why SHOULD I?

I am the kind of person who if you tell me I have to do something that is the best way to get me to not do it. I want to talk about church from a different angle. I want to talk about what are the benefits of being a part of a local church? What are you getting from a local church that you can't get anywhere else?

Let's ask the Father to send His Spirit to us this morning. Lord, it is great to be here with a room of men who want to study Your Word. It's great to be with a group of guys who are doing life together each week. Father, we are just so grateful You would gather us together every week here in this room, in a civic center, so we can study Your Word and be brothers. Lord, I pray for the next little bit here that You would illuminate Your Scripture for us, that we would understand it better; that we could understand Your Word better and build Your kingdom here on earth for Your glory, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

It is probably no secret to you that a lot of guys just don't like going to church. If you go to church today you can see the ramifications of that today. There is a whole ministry built called Church for Men. Go to www.churchformen.com. David Murrow is from Alaska and used to be the press secretary for the governor's office, including Governor Palin for a while. David wrote a very popular book called *Why Men Hate Going to Church*. He has done some research for us. For instance, the typical U.S. congregation (study done in 2003) is 61% female 39% male. About 3:2,

for every two guys in the church there are three women. If you are single, that might not be bad odds, but for the married guys it is not a good sign. Here is the interesting thing to me. More than 90% of men believe in God. Five out of six men call themselves Christians, but only one out of six are in church every Sunday. Only 20% of the guys who call themselves Christians are in church on Sunday. The average man accepts the reality of Christ but fails to see any value in going to church.

Why is that? We have just not made church very attractive. A lot of guys were brought up in the church. I was brought up in church and then I went to college. I have a daughter in college. My college church experience did not give me much hope about my daughter going to church in college if she is anything like her father. I did find a church in college. It was my fraternity. That was my church. I had a group of brothers. We even used the same language. We met together at least weekly. Some meetings were business meetings and some of those meetings were not business. We shared goals – some moral, some immoral. But we had our own set of values that we lived by and we tried to stay consistent with those standards. We took care of each other. When I was in college my dad had a heart attack. I was freaked out and worried about him. My fraternity brothers took care of me. They sent me home and sent pledges to my classes for me to take notes so that when I got back I had notes taken. One of my brothers talked to one of my professors and layed it on thick. I found out when I got back. They called my mom, “Brett’s coming home; he is on his way.” Made me coffee and put it in a thermos and sent me home to see my dad. They took care of me. That was my church in college.

I graduated and moved in with a buddy I grew up with in church. We had a deal. We told our moms, because our moms wanted us to go to church that any week that you don’t ask us about going to church we will go to church. It is kind of an arrogant thing looking back but it made sense at the time. The sad thing is we knew our mothers so well that we knew we had a pretty good chance of not having to go to church each week. For a solid year, one mom or the other would do something like this: Hey boys good to see you. Blah, blah, blah. Did you go to church this week? Not anymore. And I got really good at golf that year. My buddy and I would play golf on Sundays. Our mothers made it possible for us to attend the local golf course because they kept asking about it. As if it was their fault. It was our choice. It wasn’t really an exciting thing. At that age I didn’t think going to church was that great a deal.

It wasn’t an exciting thing. Some studies say as many as 70% of men don’t go to church after they graduate high school. Many of them come back. What is it about the gap? There is an 18-29 gap in your church. They leave because maybe they don’t see the importance of it once they are done with their high school group and all the smoke and concerts and crazy activities that you do in youth group.

I remember that in the last couple of years my youth group did a game where they blindfold people, put things in a blender, like a Big Mac and fries and a milkshake. They put it in a blender and challenged each other to drink it. That’s cool, isn’t it? When was the last time you saw that in a church service? Maybe it is not exciting anymore.

Ten years later, what happens to a man between 18-28? He gets married, has kids, looks at the kids and says I have no idea what I am doing and goes back to church. That is one of the things that tends to happen.

This is what we will look at this morning. What do guys say church is? Then we will talk about this idea that is sort of on the top and bottom of this that the church was made for you and you were made for the church. We will talk about what I mean by that. Then we will talk about being involved in something bigger.

CHURCH IS...

Let's talk about what church is. I teach a Bible study at my church on Wednesday nights and I told them what I was doing today and they helped be a little bit with this. I told them I would give them a Shout Out. Iron Men Bible Study at Willow Creek Church in Winter Springs, thanks for your help with this. If ask guys what is church, I thought it would be a five minute intro. 30 minutes later we filled the white board and most of it is negative.

Some of the things I hear form guys who don't like to go to church, church is boring. If you think about a church service it is not designed for guys. We walk into a big room with a bunch of people we don't know at the back of someone's head in front of us. We stand and sit when we are told. We sing songs – great songs. Not the kind of songs we listen to on the radio. Not the kind we think about throughout the week. Then we top it off with a 30-minute lecture. Not really designed for guys. We are more experiential. We like to do stuff. We like action and tasks. We say it's boring. Sometimes we hear them say it is irrelevant. That Christian stuff is great but it doesn't help me in my everyday life.

Or we hear that it is too feminine. My wife loves church. The atmosphere they create is great for the women. My wife loves the pink carpet and paisley wallpaper. Have you been to a ladies room at church lately? It's like a parlor you can hang out in.

They feel like the church caters to women. It is sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy if a church has more women than men in it, who will it cater to? Then men will get uncomfortable, then it caters more to women because that is who is there and there is a vicious cycle. For a lot of guys that is how they see church. It doesn't have an impact in their lives; it doesn't seem interesting to me; It doesn't make sense to me. Frankly it is not my style. It is not really what I think about. We take a guy who is a successful businessman who makes things happen in his job and goes to church and sees this organization being run. He wants to help out and get things done. What's a way I can put my skills to work? We set him at a door handing out pieces of paper. You get to be an usher. There is nothing wrong with being an usher. You get to meet a lot of people. There are not a lot of places. In a lot of churches it is hard for a guy who is making things happen throughout the week, making big decisions, then he goes to church and there is no way for him to plug in.

This is what church is to a lot of guys. The church has many rivals but no equals. Here is the thing I would say about church. It is the best place for a man to overcome the effects of the fall. If you have a Bible turn to Genesis 3. Let's look at what the effects of the fall are specifically on men. I will skip to Verse 8. The story is Adam is in the Garden, and God says it is not good for man to be alone. They go through all the animals, no suitable helper there, so God creates woman. Adam looks at her and goes, "Whoa, man." That is how she got her name – woman.

They were in the Garden and one thing God said was not to eat the fruit of this tree. The serpent comes, deceives Eve, and Adam was right there when she ate the fruit. She gave him some, he ate, and Verse 8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden." We see right away what a guy does – as soon as he sins he hides. We are all prone to hiding from the things we do wrong. We are all prone to isolating ourselves. A guy in difficult times will withdraw – not everybody – but most men. They become independent and self-focused. This is what happened in the fall.

"But the LORD God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'" So there is fear. "He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'"

Adam knew he was naked. It is not as if he looked down and all of a sudden realized he was naked. God said who told you there was anything wrong with that? Who gave you a weird skewed view of the world? I made the world a certain way, you sinned, and all of a sudden there was a problem. I didn't change. I am God. Something changed in you. There is a misunderstanding of the way the world works. There is an ignorance, if you will, about how the world is supposed to work. Adam said in Verse 12, that woman you gave me; it ain't my fault God. That woman you gave me, she gave me the fruit that I ate. It is a deepening immaturity. He sounds like a five year old. That woman you gave me gave me the fruit and I ate and you see his immorality of blaming somebody else.

Skip down to Verse 17, and now you see the consequences. The curse. God set the world up to work a certain way and because Adam sinned God set the consequences. God doesn't say I wonder what I'll do if Adam sins. No, this is the way the world works, Adam and these are the consequences. "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.'"

Here we see the introduction of futility into the world. You will work and it will not give you the result equal to the amount of work you put into it. No matter how hard you work you will not get it. Entropy comes into the world. The idea of a lesser result than the effort you put into it. "It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Adam starts to struggle, and we struggle with insignificance. Work your tail off, die. Wow. That is quite a consequence. Here is my supposition here. Here is my proposal to you. I would say that the church gives us the best place to overcome the effects of the fall. To begin to return things to get a glimpse of returning things to the way things should be. The church gives us a place to do that.

Here is the big idea. Church **was made for you, and you were made for the church.** I am not talking about some narcissistic way saying church was made for you. I am made for this. Shaun White the great snowboarder – he was made to be a snowboarder – the long hair, the tricks. This isn't some narcissistic thing. The fit is perfect. Church was made for you and you were made for the church. Not only does church fit your needs the way God made you, we are the perfect

fit for the church. It takes men and women too, but it takes men to have the church become all it can be.

CHURCH WAS MADE FOR YOU

The church was made for you. The first way the church was made for you is it gives you a place to worship. The church is often the first place we can reconnect with God. It reminds us of who He is. It takes our focus off of ourselves. Adam, when he sinned focused on himself. I'm naked. What worship does is help us put our focus back focusing on God and realizing who he is. The church gives us an organized intentional place for us to do that. Can you worship God on the golf course, on your Harley Davidson, in the woods? Absolutely. But church is the place that points us back to who God is and a place to do that collectively. If we are going to refocus our life on God the church is a great place for you to do that.

The second thing the church provides you is a place to be taught. Adam had this fundamental misunderstanding of how the world works and he became ignorant and we joined him. The church gives us a place to come back and be taught again. 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul says look, find some faithful men and teach them everything I taught you and turn around and I want those guys to teach others. We see this sequence. What was Timothy? A pastor. Paul was talking to Timothy. Find some guys and teach them and equip them to teach others. You find this all through Paul's letters to the churches...he is telling them be a place where people can come and be taught.

Think about what a church provides you with. Imagine you wanted to understand the Scriptures as well as you could? The Old Testament was written in Hebrew. Ever seen Hebrew? Tough language. And the New Testament was written in the ancient Greek.

You would have to learn Hebrew and Greek. It's been 2000 years since Jesus walked the earth. There has been a lot of studying since then. You might want to find out what the church fathers taught. You might want to look at a word in a passage and you think I wonder how many times this word was used in the Bible and what it means in other places. You would have to do all that work to understand Scriptures on your own.

What do we have in church? A guy who does that. All of our churches have a guy who has learned Hebrew, Greek, what all the maps mean in the back of the Bible. He spends up to 20 hours a week and distills that into a 30-45 minute talk. He gets rid of the chaff. He reads the church fathers. He has the commentaries. You've walked into a pastor's study. We get access to that when we go to church. The pastor is someone who does all the work to distill the information. You could do the work yourself, but you have a job to do. You have to put food on the table and you want to know as much as you can about the Bible. The church gives us a place to do that.

This is a weird one. Did you know we were built to be under authority? What was one of Adam's biggest sins was he withdrew himself not only from fellowship with God but the authority of God. He said I know you said I shouldn't eat the fruit from the tree, but I decided it was okay.

When we are under authority it does two things. It allows us to be under the care of someone who knows more than we do about something, and who has different life experiences than we

have. When we allow ourselves to be under someone's authority we say help me avoid the pitfalls and avoid becoming the man I don't want to be. If you are not under authority nobody can do that for you.

The other thing being under authority is does it help you focus forward on what you would like to accomplish. We can together accomplish a lot more than any one individual. In my fraternity we had a test file. You know what that is? Everyone collected their test and gave them to the fraternity. If I had a class and fraternity brother had the class before me, I could pull the test out and see how that professor might test me. We had a shared purpose of doing as well as we could in school (doing as little work as possible but that was another issue). Together we could do more than alone. Someone organized this and we put ourselves in this fraternity under that authority. Part of being under their authority is putting your test in. The church does that for us to. It says we are going in this direction and we will accomplish more when we are all focused on the same objective. That is what being under authority allows us to do. That is the way the church is made for you.

YOU WERE MADE FOR THE CHURCH

How are you made for the church? You were made to have brothers. You were made to have brothers. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." We were made to be together. The writer of Hebrews says don't give up meeting each other so we can encourage each other. I have brothers who want the best for me. I was made to be in relationship with brothers. You were made to be in a relationship with brothers. Do you know what happens to a man who isolates himself? He turns into the Unabomber. He turns into Timothy McVeigh. He turns into a person who focuses inwardly. Maybe you have seen people like this who are kind of nuts.

You are sort of known by the company you keep. Who do you want to be in a relationship with.? You want to be in relationship with people who can help you be the man you want to be.

Finally, you were made for a mission. God told Adam to tend the garden and take care of it; to fill the earth and subdue it. You get to name all the animals. That is how much you are in charge. Adam said, nah. I don't want to do that anymore. I want to do my own thing. He became inwardly focused; independent. When we get involved in a church, we get that sense of mission. These are all linked together. The church gives us a place to serve – a place focus our efforts and to belong to a larger mission. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul talks about how now we are all part of the new mission God gave us which is the ministry of reconciliation. By being involved in the church we are part of God's work to restore man after the fall. The ministry of reconciliation; reconciling man back to God. That is part of your mission. We can only do that when we are part of a church.

SOMETHING BIGGER

The big idea, **the church was made for you, and you were made for the church.** Let's talk about this last piece which is being involved in something bigger. Think about this. Most guys I know want to be involved in something bigger than themselves. Think about this. You will worship something. You will say something is the most important thing; maybe your golf game, job or

career. I can't think of a bigger thing to worship than God. The almighty, omnipotent, omnipresent, omni benevolent God of the universe who made everything. I'd rather be involved in worshipping Him. He is the biggest thing I can worship.

What do you want to learn? You can learn a narrow focus. Maybe about how to make a lot of money or maybe you are a scientist who learns about astrophysics. What about learning about the way the universe is made? What about learning ultimate truth? That is bigger than the petty things you are involved in, in the world. Whose authority do you want to be under? You can view authority as a nasty boss. Or you can put yourself into this structure that the ultimate authority is God. That something is bigger than you. You can have a few friends in your neighborhood, or at your office or softball team. When you become part of a church you become part of a network that is vast. Something that is bigger than you.

What do you want to accomplish in life? Do you want to be part of making a company successful or getting your kids through college? They are all good things. The church gives me a chance to be a part of something way bigger; a part of reconciliation, a part of God restoring the world back. Ultimately, it will happen when He comes back. We can be a part of building God's kingdom waiting for that day for Him to return.

This is how many guys look at the church. I want to challenge you to make the church look exciting. Make the church be meaningful. Make the church be challenging. This is what guys need. It is our responsibility. We have to step into our churches. We have to help the church become these things. We cannot just be consumers. We have to be leaders. We can't just go and participate. We need to go and push the church forward, and make ourselves available. Challenge other guys with us to become the men God made us to be. This is what the church gives you the opportunity to do. Here is our big idea. Be involved in something bigger than yourself because **the church was made for you, and you were made for the church.** Let's pray.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we have all had experiences and the church has just let us down. Lord, that is the nature of the fall. We let you down everyday but You keep coming back to us and pursuing us. You don't withhold Your love from us because we don't meet Your expectations. Help us to have that same grace towards our churches. Help us to see the church as a place we can go and inspire other men to become the men they could be if they follow you. Make the church a bold place where 18-year-olds don't look forward to the day they don't have to go anymore. Make church a place that calls men to a higher calling, that calls us to be noble, learned, to know the Scriptures, that calls us to worship the read God who is the Master, Creator, Father and Savior.

I pray in each of our hearts, You would quicken our hearts towards Your church. That all the places we go to worship and belong there would be a wave of men who get involved to invest their lives in the church. In Jesus' Name. Amen.