

The Amazing Body of Christ

“Let us not give up meeting together. Some are in the habit of doing this. Instead, let us cheer each other up with words of hope” (Hebrews 10:25 NIRV).

- I. **A very candid research project called, “Empty Pews Are an American Public Health Crisis” thoroughly documents a decrease in church attendance as significantly “harming the well-being of those who have stopped attending” (Christianity Today, October 19, 2021).**
 - A. The authors, Tyler J. Vanderweele and Brendan Case, examined data from various sources, including the behavior of participants from the “Nurses’ Health Study,” which followed more than 70,000 health workers over a period of 16 years. Some of these results are posted on the next page.
 - B. Below are some more conclusions made from their extensive research.
 1. “Our research suggests that religious service attendance specifically, rather than private practices or self-assessed religion or spirituality, most powerfully predicts health.”
 2. “Religious observance seems to decrease depression and increase life satisfaction, particularly by expanding participants’ networks of social support, as well as by promoting optimism or hope and a sense of meaning in life.”
 3. “Many Christians experience church attendance as an encounter with God made flesh. In the Bible, as well as in the church, we see God’s power alongside the forces we can study.”
 4. “Religious communities provide a strong social safety net that other institutions can’t replace. This has important implications, not only for religious communities themselves, but also for counseling and health care, for public policy, and for individuals and for families.”
 5. “Religious participation is not simply a matter of civil liberties but also a significant health concern.”
- II. **The full revelation of Scripture reveals that God lives in His Church (Matthew 18:18-20). Paul’s metaphor of the Church as the Body of Christ is powerful and real (I Corinthians 12:12-31).**
 - A. Everyone’s gift is important (I Corinthians 12:14-20).
 - B. We really do need one another. Never underestimate how much. This is God’s design (I Corinthians 12:21-22).
 - C. Our unity is everything. Therefore, we must be careful to give honor to those gifts that are less visible. This produces belonging and unity (I Corinthians 12:21-26).
- III. **We can happily experience the fullness of Christ that spills out into the world through a revelation of the love of Christ and the full release of spiritual gifts Christ apportions in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:7-16).**
 - A. We can happily and faithfully administer God’s grace to each other (I Peter 4:7-11).
 - B. “Steward” is the Greek word “oikonomos”—“oiko” (house), “nomos” (distribute).
 - C. We distribute grace to God’s house and to the world.

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