

The Privilege of Assembly

Alma 6:5

Now I would that ye should understand that the word of God was liberal unto all, that none were deprived of the privilege of assembling themselves together to hear the word of God.

This verse struck me one day as I was reading. In the Church we make great efforts to get people to attend. However, this points out that attendance is a privilege, and that denying others of that privilege would also be against God's plan.

Also, in 3 Nephi 18:22 Christ identifies assembly as a commandment: “And behold, ye shall meet together oft.” Many people respond to the need to partake of the sacrament as the reason for attending church, and certainly that is part of the reason. But the very act of going to meet with the saints is also in fulfillment of a commandment. Christ goes on to say: “...and ye shall not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together.” This business of assembling with the saints is meant to be taken very seriously, from all sides. Church attendance is a blessing, a privilege, a commandment, and an obligation of church membership. We should do it ourselves, encourage others likewise, and in no way discourage or impede anyone else from attending.

How do we discourage others from attending? Presumably there could be active opposition, but I have rarely (if ever) seen that happen. But what about the non-member who attended an Institute class, only to find a lesson that was so esoteric that she felt it would not be useful for her to attend any more? Do we sometimes make it so hard to participate, either through teachings or traditions, that we forbid others from coming? I know the brother who taught the lesson, and I am sure that he had no intention of making assembly difficult. But the effect is the same. If we do not teach the gospel in clarity and truth, relying upon the Spirit of the Lord to help us to reach our audience, we may be stepping into a graver error than we ever anticipated.

Church attendance – our own, as well as that of others – is a weighty responsibility. I think of what the Church does for me, do I remember what it does for others? The Church doesn't need us nearly as much as we need the Church.

© Copyright 2004 BookofMormonMusings.info
30 July 2004