

What Will I Do with My Sunday Evenings?

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

Two weeks from today, the Franklin Church is making a huge change. We are moving our Sunday evening assembly and attaching that time to our morning assembly. That means instead of assembling to worship God and edify one another for two hours separated by a six hour break, we are doing so with only a ten minute break. We will have one extended assembly on Sundays. Of course, we are all looking forward to this with varying degrees of excitement, trepidation or discomfort. But one overriding question probably lingers with us all. What will I do with my Sunday evenings? I recognize this is not going to be an amazing theological or doctrinal discussion setting us on some right path of Christian living. However, I think we should take a few moments just to consider something very practical for our present course of action.

Discussion:

I. Foundational Tidbits

- A. First, I want to reiterate that this change is absolutely scriptural. Further, it is not an indication or indictment of anyone's spirituality.
 1. In **Acts 20:7ff**, the church in Troas only assembled once on Sunday. Granted on this particular occasion, they met for a very extended period. However, the text implies that incredible length was the exception because Paul was with them and was departing the next day.
 2. In **I Corinthians 11:17ff**, the Corinthian church was meeting only once on Sunday. Additionally, I might point out that they were instructed to wait for stragglers to take the Supper not supply them with a make-up opportunity later in the day. Apparently, those who had a legitimate reason for missing, just missed it without any guilt.
- B. Second, I do want to offer a warning. I have assembled with a congregation twice on Sundays for more than 35 years. I have done so both as a Baptist and as a Christian. On three occasions in those 35 years I have spent a Sunday where the congregation met only on Sunday mornings. Each time, I felt weird. I felt as though I was violating some kind of law from God. I had to remind myself I had assembled with the congregation. I wasn't forsaking an assembly, because there was no assembly to forsake. Having said this, I am well aware that two weeks from now at this very moment, most of us will feel weird. Some of us will have to fight down the rising sense that we are disobeying God. That will be a very natural feeling. However, as we often point out, our feelings are not the great indicator of truth. I will share with you that every single person I have spoken to whose congregation have made this very same choice has told me they believed it increased their spirituality, their devotion, their meaning for the edification and worship in the assembly and even their connection to their brethren.
- C. Third, since I am presenting this on a Sunday evening, I fear the ones who most need to hear this won't. But I need to say it at least for me to be satisfied that it has actually been publicly verbalized. **Hebrews 10:25** says we must not neglect our assembling together. That means when the congregation is assembling, we are to be there. This leads me to two statements.
 1. Those who have consistently forsaken the Sunday evening assemblies of this congregation have a spiritual problem. Their problem is deeper than just neglecting the assemblies. Their neglect is merely a symptom of the real problem of spiritual immaturity. When we no longer meet on Sunday evenings, the brethren with this problem will no longer be forsaking our assembly. However, that does not suddenly make them mature Christians. If you have been forsaking any of our assemblies, I encourage you to dig deep in your heart and start maturing through the Word.
 2. As we have demonstrated, a congregation is not obligated to have two assemblies on Sunday. However, if a congregation does assemble twice, **Hebrews 10:25** demonstrates it's members are responsible to attend. Over the coming years, many of us will move to other areas and other congregations, especially our young people who graduate and move elsewhere. If you become a member of a congregation that still meets twice on Sunday, you will be responsible to assemble with them at every assembly. Do not think our choice for this congregation represents the limit of assemblies you ever need to attend anywhere.

D. Fourth, the elders have made this choice because they believed it was the best management of our assembly time. They did not make this choice in order to lay some burden on any of us regarding other responsibilities they expect us to fulfill on Sunday evenings. Thus, I'm about to share with you some ways to maximize our time and to ultimately benefit this congregation. But I do not want this to be construed as the elders saying, "We moved our evening assembly time so you have to do such and such." Just as the elders never directed the other 21 hours of your Sunday when we met twice, they are not directing the other 21 hours of your Sunday now that we are meeting only once. I'm just sharing some possibilities with you.

II. What can I do with my Sunday evenings?

- A. *Time for Rest and Rejuvenation*: I imagine starting with this one is a bit of a shock. I'm sure some will see this as confirmation that going to one assembly is about our own personal convenience. That, however, is not the case. I bring this up because of the Old Testament Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day of increased spiritual devotion for our Old Testament counterparts. **Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13-17** says the Sabbath was dedicated as holy to the Lord. However, notice it was also a day of rest. Sunday is not the New Testament Sabbath. This Sabbath law does not apply to our Sunday. We are not put to death if we do any work on Sunday. However, I simply want us to note that a day can be holy, devoted to God and also be used as a day for us to rest and be rejuvenated. Remember, our Shepherd is the one who makes us lie down in green pastures and leads us beside still waters (**Psalms 23:1-2**). Frankly, I'm excited about this because for my family, Sunday has often been the least restful and rejuvenating day of the week. I believe our new schedule will help us with this no matter what we do with our Sunday evenings.
- B. *Additional Personal Study Time*: In **Acts 20:32**, Paul commended the Ephesian elders to God and His word. **James 1:21-23** demonstrates that the Word, if heard and then applied, will save our souls. **II Timothy 3:16-17** explains that the Word will teach, reprove, correct and train us in righteousness so we may be equipped for every good work. These passages and numerous others demonstrate we need to spend personal time in the Word of God. What better time to do so than our Sunday evenings? For me, this change actually provides more than an hour for this kind of work. I don't know about you, but there are numerous things I never do on Sunday because in the afternoon I think, "There is no point getting started because I'll just have to quit in a little while to get ready for our evening assembly." Then afterwards I think, "Well, no point in getting started now because it's so late." This provides me good time to get real work done in whatever endeavor I choose, especially if it is personal study time.
- C. *Additional Family Time*: We do have very hectic schedules throughout the week. That makes it really tough to have decent family time then. Our schedule in the past has made it equally hard to have good family time on Sunday. In fact, for my family, our Sunday family time was usually spent frustrated with each other because somebody was making us late for getting to both assemblies. Our new schedule provides a great opportunity for our families to spend more time together as a family. Granted, not all family time has to be about some specific spiritual task. But I will remind you of the principle taught in **Deuteronomy 6:5-9**. We need to spend time with our families and especially our children passing the word on to them, not merely relying on the congregation to teach our kids. But we also need to spend time just talking with our families, playing games with them, enjoying them. These times often pass on great spiritual truths just by modeling healthy family interaction.
- D. *Spiritual Time with Other Christians*: In **Acts 2:46-47**, the first Christians spent time with each other from house to house praising God. In **Acts 12:12**, Christians gathered at Mary's house to pray for special needs. What better time for Christians to decide to get together to sing, study, pray, encourage, confess, share, bolster and teach than on our newly opening Sunday evenings? Whether we do this on Sunday evenings or not, we need to be doing it sometime.
- E. *Increased Hospitality*: In **Acts 2:46-47**, the brethren were not just gathering in each other's homes for spiritual purposes. They were also practicing hospitality, accepting one another into their homes and feeding each other. **I Peter 4:8-9** demonstrates hospitality is part of loving each other. Hospitality is not just for those people with really nice homes or for those who have it all together and keep their homes really neat and clean. Hospitality is a responsibility every Christian has. Now that we don't have to worry about people not being able to come over because

they will have to leave so early to get the kids ready for the Sunday evening assembly and now that we don't have to worry about people being able to stay for a while but being out too late that they can't get enough rest for work and school the next day, what better opportunity than Sunday afternoon to show hospitality and just have some together time with our brethren?

- F. *Increased Evangelism*: I know this one sounds odd. But one of the brothers here plans on taking this opportunity to visit some of the churches in the area that teach error and try to set up Bible studies. I'm sure some would not feel comfortable in such an arrangement. However, what better opportunity to follow the example of Paul in **Acts 16:13** than to go someplace where you know folks are meeting to discuss spiritual things but they are in error?

Conclusion:

As I said, the elders did not make this change in order to lay another burden on us with our Sunday evenings. As they have not ever directed the other 21 hours of our Sundays before, they are not beginning to do so now. However, with this remarkable change we are about to undergo, I simply thought it might be good to think through some things that will maximize the spiritual benefit of this change. For my part, I do hope none of us simply allow this change to give us more time to fritter away on useless endeavors. However, that is not just a hope for Sunday evenings but for all our time. Whether we are talking about Sunday evenings or any other time of the week, let us keep **Ephesians 5:15-16** in mind: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (ESV).