
Bible Talk

This week the question is: **Is watching a church service on the internet equivalent to assembling for worship?**

During the COVID lockdown of 2020 many congregations began to live-stream what they called a "worship service" on the internet. Members were encouraged to turn on their computers and iPads and connect. Some churches provided small containers of grape juice which had a peel off lid for the juice and on the other side a peel off lid for a small wafer of unleavened bread. People were encouraged to drive by during the week and pick up these wafers and cups, so that, when they tuned in on Sundays to watch the internet presentation, they could have communion in their homes while watching the preacher conduct services in front of a camera that was live-streaming the entire event. One preacher told me very seriously and with great confidence: "*Watching a church service online is an assembly of the church.*"

The question being asked this week is simply this: **If a person stays home and watches a live-stream of a church service, eats his wafer of unleavened bread, and drinks his little cup of grape juice, have they assembled and worshipped God?**

The answer is simply: No. Watching a church service on live-stream is not attending a church service.

Acts 20:7

⁷ Now on the first day of the week, when the

disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

Hebrews 10:25

²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

These passage speak of "*coming together*" and "*assembling*." Assembling requires being present bodily.

In our modern, computer age, we are gradually changing the definitions of all sorts of words to accommodate sinful behavior.

- The US Supreme Court has changed the definition of "*marriage*" to include same sex couples. Contrary to modern terminology, the Bible's definition of marriage is all that matters. Marriage is only between a male and female who are eligible to be married to each other.
- The word "*attend*" is similar. The word "*attend*" is defined as: "*to be present at: to go to*" (Definition of ATTEND. 19 Sept. 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attend>; accessed 9/30/24). When people say they are "*attending*" online classes at the University of Arizona, they have changed the meaning of the word "*attend*."
- When someone turns on his television and watches the Dallas Cowboys play football, he is lying if he tell his friends: "*I attended the Dallas Cowboys game on Sunday*." Let me correct that—he's either lying or delusional.

Attending and assembling in the Bible is not based on modern definitions of words that have been changed in their meaning.

If a church service is pre-recorded and is not being live-streamed, could a person say they "*attended*" a church service that was not even in session at the time they watched? If so, what did they "go to" (the meaning of "*attend*"). How can one "go to" something that's not even occurring at the time they "go to" it?

Suppose the preacher records a "*church service*" on Saturday afternoon—just the preacher and his camera during COVID lockdown. Is this really a church service?

- Did anyone "*come together*"?
- Is watching a prerecorded program equivalent to watching a live-streamed broadcast?
- How can a person know if what he's watching a live-streamed or pre-recorded service? Does it even matter?
- If the preacher can prerecord the service on Saturday, can other people watch the recording on Saturday and say they "*attended worship*" and had communion on Saturday—when the Bible says communion should be observed on the first day of the week?
- When the preacher takes "*communion*" by himself as he's recording his "*church service*," is he really having communion?

The word communion means: "*sharing together*." What is being shared together when someone is at home alone drinking grape juice out of a throw-away miniature cup which they don't share with anyone? If communion does not involve others in the church, and if communion is strictly between a person and God, they why

did the scripture teach Christians to "*come together to break the bread*" (Acts 20:7)?

Scripture teaches communion is sharing one loaf and one cup with each other in an assembly of the church (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). This cannot be done at home alone. It requires being present at and going to a location where the other saints have assembled and worshipping together—even during COVID. Pandemics are no excuse for missing the assembly of the church and live-streaming a church service is not a substitute for getting up and going to church.

Announcements

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There, at our website, you may download the notes and the audio file of this message you just listened to.

We invite you to call again every week as we consider different subjects on ***Bible Talk***.

