

Why we Value Our Sunday Evening Service

It seems as though the Sunday Evening service, in many churches, is going the way of the dodo (ie. dead dead). As the pastors of this church body, we wanted to express why we value our Sunday evening service with the hope that these sentiments will resonate with you or help you develop new found love for the Sunday evening service. Of course, our ultimate aim is that we not simply love a service, but that we, as a church, aim to glorify God and to experience His grace in all we do together.

What is the purpose of the Sunday evening service?

There are several different things that happen in the life of our church family each week and they all serve a slightly different purpose. Perhaps a quick overview would be most helpful.

- The **Sunday school** hour and **mid-week Bible studies** serve to equip us as we learn to be better students of God's Word and glean the fruit of greater trust and obedience to God.
- Our **worship service** is the gathering of the whole body, made up of all its diverse members, to join our hearts, voices, and minds in worshiping God by singing, praying, and hearing His Word. It is the main feeding time for the flock.
- **Sunday evenings** are a time for us to pray together, to discuss the sermon we heard in the morning, and to receive updates on missionaries, unreached people groups, and local outreach ministries. Additionally, we have a program for preschool through elementary age children with the goal of teaching them foundational theological truth at a child's level.

Each of the meetings, services, and studies serve a purpose, and we value all of them. As Shepherds we believe the priority is the Sunday morning time of worship. However, since the evening service is the one that often gets overlooked, we'd like to focus on why we value it with the hope of shepherding us to see its benefits and joyfully participate in it.

Reasons we value the Sunday evening service

1. **It is the time we have set aside for praying *together*.** It is such a joy to *hear* other brothers and sisters thanking God, praying for one another, and praying for the needs of our world. We see the early church was marked by praying together and can imagine that it was not a burden but a joy for them too (Acts 2:42, 4:23-ff; 1 Tim. 2).
2. **It is an opportunity to fulfill the command to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15).** This can and should happen one-on-one, on Sunday mornings, and at Bible studies too. But Sunday evenings provide a great opportunity for this as we are gathering primarily to pray together. We can thank God for engagements, births, and job promotions. We can ask for his mercy for those facing loneliness, losses, and trials (1 Cor. 12:26).
3. **It is a great chance to interact with the sermon we heard.** Sermons are the main feeding of our souls each week. Rather than having another teaching time (in addition to Sunday school, a Bible study, and the sermon) the elders wanted to provide a chance for us to digest the rich feast of God's Word we just had during the worship service. We want to be doers of the word. Additionally, this allows an opportunity to ask questions and gain new insights together.

4. **It is another time for fellowship.** The more often we see each other and interact, the better the chances are that we will be able to move past merely socializing (which is good) to fellowship (encouraging one another in our walk with God).
5. **As Christians we want to be with fellow believers as often as possible.** This has always been a mark of God's *people* (Psalm 16:3, Acts 2:42, 46).
6. **It helps us keep Sunday set apart for special enjoyment in God.** For centuries, Christians have referred to Sunday as "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). Not that this is the only day that is His. Rather it is a day uniquely set aside to have more focused attention on worshiping Him and on being with His people. Sunday evenings give us the other bookend to the Lord's Day. Without it, Sunday could easily become a day like any other save a 90-minute block of worship.

Consider being part of the Sunday evening service

There are reasons it may be hard to come. For some, the drive is too much to do twice a day. Those with young children might also find it difficult to come (though we have purposely set the service to run from 5-6 p.m. with the goal of making it easier for those with young children to attend). We do not want to imply that it is sinful to not attend on Sunday evenings. We simply want to express why we, as your pastors, value Sunday evenings and encourage you to develop the habit of gathering with us. It is a commitment for the elders to lead another service, but we believe it is worthwhile. May it continue to serve as a blessing to our church family.

In Christ,

The Elders