

Read: Isaiah 56:1,6-8

What Good Is Going to Church?

Isaiah 56:6,7a

Foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There are lots of people who don't go to church. Are you one of them? If you do go, do you get up to go to church with the same joy that King David had? In one of his psalms he wrote, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" (Psalm 122:1). Can you hear the joy in his voice? How many times has someone in your house heard you say, "I can't wait to go to church!!"

What good is going to church?

It might help to travel back in time to the LORD's temple of long ago, during the time of Isaiah. The people of Israel were allowed into the temple courtyards. They would go there for festivals that the LORD told them were important. Often, they went out of obligation or tradition. They brought sacrifices. But many did it because they felt they had to.

They missed the point of going to the temple. They missed the beauty of the LORD and his invitation and his Word and his wonder and his promises. Compare that to the attitude of a foreigner in the temple. Foreigners were people who had grown up knowing only the cold emptiness of idol worship and had not come into contact with the true and living God. They weren't members of God's people. They understood they didn't even deserve to be there. They understood how meaningless—and sinful—their life was apart from the true God. They loved the fact that God would share with foreigners his righteousness and salvation—all of it promised through the coming Savior.

Foreigners knew this: they were in church because of God's grace. They didn't come because they *had to*. God's love inspired them. They *loved to* come to the LORD's house!

What a different attitude!

May it be so with us too. Sometimes you may not feel like going to church. But it's in church you discover the remarkable things God does for you. You also will discover what remarkable things God can do with your feelings when you're there. May God give you joy that expresses itself as you say, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!"

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Name three things you do when you go to church.
- Why does God want you to go to church?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Describe the *foreigner* today's devotion talked about.
- Why were foreigners (or Gentiles) so happy to go to God's house (the temple)?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Pretend you are a parent. Your child doesn't want to go to church and then says, "It isn't as if you have to go every week." How would you respond?
- Discuss with your family how to encourage one another to make worship a priority and maintain an attitude of thanks and joy.

Closing Prayer:

Dearest Lord, thank you for the privilege and opportunity to worship you with others at my church. Help me to go there often with a joyful and thankful spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.