

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Empty Seats” Part 2

by Brian Meade

The year 2020 turned life for so many Americans—and for those throughout the world—upside down! It changed our interaction with others to little or no contact in direct social settings. People feared getting closer than six feet away from each other as they only went out of their homes for essential supplies.

Churches had to deal with “empty seats” in way we never have before. And we hope, as things are getting somewhat better now, that we are on the road to recovering what we lost in our social distancing.

We talked in some detail about what empty seats can do and say about our spiritual life in Christ. And we now want to conclude by saying what they cannot do for anyone and especially for the Lord.

Empty seats Cannot:

(1) They Cannot Support The Truth.

In Exodus 17:8-13, we find the time when God granted the children of Israel victory over their enemies for as long as Moses would keep his hands up. This began to be very difficult as Moses grew tired and needed support.

Exodus 17:12 tells us, *“But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.”* Aaron and Hur were there for Moses to help him when he could not do it alone. As we apply this to the church, we need to be there for each other for the Gospel’s sake and so that the word of the Lord can prosper in our area. The only way this truly happens is when we support one another for the truth’s sake. In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul told Timothy that the church is, *“the pillar and support of the truth”*. Our presence, participation, love, acceptance, defense, and proclamation of truth is how we support it.

But empty seats cannot support the truth. They have more in common with those the apostle Paul speaks of in 2 Timothy 4:16, *“At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me;”*

2. They Cannot Edify And Build Up Our Knowledge Of The Truth.

There was once a young preacher who continually missed Bible studies that was offered by the church where he was preaching. The brethren met with him and discussed how it looked, as he never came to study with everyone at the appointed time of Bible study. He told them that he didn’t get much out of their Bible studies and he studied the Scriptures better at home. But someone pointed out that Bible study at assemblies is for everyone’s benefit, and what if you could help someone out with Bible answers to their questions? What if you were not there to help, it would go without saying that no help would be offered to them, on that day, or any. You would simply be an empty seat to them.

But the Bible admonishes us to be there to help each other grow in our understanding of the the truth. Paul told young Timothy to read study, and grow as a Christian in 1 Timothy 4:13-15— so that he can help others as well.

Notice verse 16, *“Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”*



God's word will build us up if we work together (Acts 20:32).

3. They Cannot Encourage And Strengthen The Brethren.

Along this same line of helping each other, we need to be there for one another to encourage us when we need it. We can draw strength from each other, but we need to be there to do it. Paul was absent from his brethren at Thessalonica, but he sent Timothy there in 1 Thessalonians 3:2, "*and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.*"

Let us strive to help in this important area of our faith!

4. They Cannot Properly Worship God.

Paul was speaking to the Corinthians about a lack of togetherness in eating the Lord's supper and for the proper meaning. He told them in 1 Corinthians 11:33, "*So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.*" He corrected some problems of those who did "*not judge the body rightly.*" (1 Corinthians 11:29).

If not discerning the body as one partakes it brings judgment to himself, what about a failure to eat it at all? Can we properly worship together when we are not even together? That's what being an empty seat does! We cannot sing together as God directs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). We cannot give of our means as 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches us to do every first day of the week.

All of this is just basic common sense reasoning that should be apparent to all. God wants our best in worship, not anything else.

5. They Cannot Be Examples Of Real Faithfulness.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, "*Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*" The Bible presents those who are good examples to be imitated as good examples for us (1 Corinthians 11:1; 3 John 11-12).

But what about if we never see someone because their seat is always empty? Can they be an influence for good on us? We know they cannot.

Also, can we hold them up as a faithful brother or sister? Faithfulness implies dependability—something we do not have as an empty seat.

6. They Cannot Truly Be Involved In The Work Of The Church.

God has work for us to—important work. It is work that never runs out as long as there are people on the earth. That's why the Bible tells us to "*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*" (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Christians are to work together as a team in the work; without teamwork, we are not going to be as effective as we should be. It takes every one doing their share (Ephesians 4:16).

Again, what if we are not around the brethren enough to know even what needs doing in the work in God's kingdom? What if brethren are planning certain works that require members to be active in accomplishing the present goals?

7. They Cannot And Do Not Please God.

God tells us in His word what pleases Him and what does not (Colossians 1:10; 2 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 13:15-16). It is our aim and goal to please God with our service to Him. Many such examples of laziness, neglect, and disobedience are throughout the Scriptures for a reason (Matthew 18:27-35; 25:25-30). They teach us what not to do, if we want to please God.

It is only logical to conclude that being absent from assemblies, without good reason, is something that doesn't please God. We may very well fall into the sin of neglect when we fail to be there when we have the ability (Hebrews 10:25-26).

8. Empty Seat Cannot Get Us To Heaven.

If we are willfully and stubbornly stay AWOL from our Christian duties, can we not see how that will be the reason we miss heaven. It would be a tragic nightmare to see our empty seat in heaven where we should be! What a haunting reality that would be?

But Jesus tells us in Luke 13:23-24, "*And someone said to Him, 'Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?'*" And He said to them, "*Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*"

Some will not be able—not because they didn't have opportunity or ability—but because they did not use the opportunities and abilities they had to enter into heaven.

They were an empty seat.

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Clois Wright, Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Randy Beaty, Sam Johnson, Sherry Doles, Steve Switcher, Roy Robinson, Danny Cottrell (Dan's Dad) and Annie Jean Harrison.

Those Who Serve:

Announcements:	Russell Briggs
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading:	Paul Busby <i>Romans 8:13-14</i>
Song Leader:	Lee Busby
Lord's Supper:	Paul Johnson
Preaching:	Brian Meade
Sermon:	<i>"Led By The Spirit"</i>
Closing Prayer:	Tim Harris Sr.



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“Led By The Spirit Of God”

Lesson Text: **Romans 8:14** *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”*

Being Led By God’s Spirit:

1. Is Not A Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit.

Did everyone receive the Spirit in Acts 8:14-17? _____.

What was the difference then and now? _____.

See Acts 8:18-19; Mark 16:17-18; Acts 14:3 (1 Corinthians 13:8-11).

2. Is A Privilege Available To All.

1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Revelation 22:17; Ephesians 3:2-5.

Can Anyone and Everyone be Led by the Spirit? _____.

3. Is God Respecting Man’s Choice/Will.

John 1:8-13— 1 Peter 1:18-25.

John 5:37-40. What was the difference in men like Peter, James, and John and with these Jews? _____.

Does God respect our free-will to choose or reject Him? _____.

4. Is What Determines God’s Family.

Romans 8:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

Galatians 3:26-27.

5. Is Simply Following God’s Word.

Ephesians 4:20-21- Where do we learn about Christ? _____.

Ephesians 4:22-31- Where do we learn about the “new man?” _____.

6. Is What Makes Us Spiritually-Minded.

Romans 8:5-6; 1 Corinthians 2:14 (vs. 16)

Where do we learn about Christ? _____.

7. Is To Be A Continual Process in Our Daily Lives.

Galatians 5:24-26— Luke 9:23.

Is the Christian life a “one and done” thing or an everyday life? _____.

Conclusion: **Isaiah 2:2-3.**