

Why do you go to church?

By [Martha Spong](#)

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The two preachers at my house have a disagreement in principle about church attendance. Oh, we're both for it under ordinary circumstances! We grew up in families where everybody went to church. We loved Sunday school and youth group and special choirs. Really, seriously, most of the time we are eager to get up and go on a Sunday morning, to lead worship in our respective congregations.

But on vacation? There we disagree. I love to visit other churches on vacation. My spouse does not. And she may have a point. Church is our workplace, and maybe the occasional sabbath spent on a beach or walking in the woods is a good thing. (Although we spent the last joint Sunday off on the road returning from vacation.)

Perhaps when I visit other churches I do it with the keen, appraising eye of a professional, taking notes for my own worship leadership. In fact, I've been guilty of preaching at one church while taking vacation from another, a kind of busman's holiday.

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Some do it out of obligation, and others to see their friends. Some do it because they always have; it's a habit. Some do it out of fear they will end up on God's bad side. I've heard people say they went to church every week when they were younger because in the day of blue laws, there was nothing else to do and nowhere else to go. I find I wonder this about the people who come and listen to me on Sundays, particularly when they look unenthusiastic about the experience. Believe me, I bring that home to ponder.

Why *do* you go to church?

In October we heard the Ten Commandments in worship and received the reminder to keep the sabbath holy. Christians worship on Sunday to mark the resurrection. It's our less elaborate adaptation of the Jewish sabbath. Most people feel no cultural pressure to attend, and some have no experience with church, and others have

made other choices for legitimate reasons of their own including past hurts.

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In February I visited my childhood church in Virginia, where, yes, I preached on a vacation Sunday. It's the place I first heard the words "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. 122:1, KJV). And I think that's the reason I keep going to church on Sundays, the reason I responded to God's call to local church ministry: I go because I am glad, week in and week out, to go into the house of the Lord.

Why do *you* go to church?

*Originally posted at [Spong's blog](#)*