

Absence Is A Symptom

Fever is an easily discernable symptom of a disorder somewhere in the body. The primary problem may be a hidden infection that would not otherwise be noticeable until it was in an advanced stage. The presence of fever, however, reveals that the infection exists. The fever is a symptom of an underlying cause.

This does not lessen the significance of fever. Hospitals check a patient's temperature every few hours because the temperature gives such insight into the condition of the body. Sometimes a patient is kept in the hospital several days after he feels well because of a lingering fever. The fever indicates that "feeling well" can be deceptive and may not reflect a person's true condition.

Unnecessary absence from worship services is a fever-like symptom. It invariably is an indication of a more basic spiritual infection or disorder of some kind. The primary problem may be deeply hidden.

As a fever may possess a man who does not know what causes it, even so a man can neglect worship without being aware of the problems that cause him to do so. He can easily camouflage his lack of concern for worship by involvement in his work, his family, or some other interest. This is especially easy when his other interest is a worthwhile one. He is then better able to rationalize that his neglect of worship is reasonable behavior under his circumstances.

Deliberately missing a worship service is always spiritually significant. It is significant because it reveals the presence of a wound, an infection, a depression, or some other primary spiritual disorder. Furthermore, the fact that a person "feels well" about his spiritual life is not a guarantee of spiritual health.

Although the church should be more interested in causes than symptoms, it cannot avoid the implications of continued absence from worship services. This would be like a parent ignoring a high fever in his child. The fever is a symptom, but the primary cause may take the child's life if the fever is ignored. Absence may take a spiritual life if it is ignored.

- ***selected***

"Making" Johnny Go To Church

A newspaper article reported the results of a poll showing various opinions concerning parental force or pressure in seeing that children attend church. The article states: "...many voiced the lament of a New Mexico mother who wrote: 'We forced our son to go to church. As soon as he left the parental roof, he left the church.'"

The logic of this mother and other parents is interesting. You will notice that only *one factor* in this child's life is taken into consideration as to why he might have "left the church" – the fact that he was forced as a child to attend.

It might be revealing to know:

1. Did the mother and father attend church *regularly*?
2. Did they *live* their faith, or were they merely "Sunday morning Christians"?
3. Were they firm, fair and consistent in their teaching and discipline of the child?
4. Did they attend a church where the truth of God's word was taught, or where the Bible is regarded as a spurious book of ancient myths and fairy tales?
5. Did they attend where the Bible was *studied*, or where children (and older folks) played games and learned crafts?

Also, we wonder if this mother "forced" her son to bathe, eat vegetables and go to school. Did he cease to bathe, quit eating and forsake education "as soon as he left the parental roof"?

Parents, your children will probably turn out to be pretty much like you. Therefore, if you want to see your child study the Bible regularly when he grows up, study the Bible with your child now. If you believe that your child should attend church after leaving home, don't send him to church – *take him*.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

- ***by Tom Moody***

Dealing With Sin

When confronted with the reality of your own sinfulness, you can:

- **JUSTIFY YOURSELF**
- like Adam did (Gen. 3:12)
- **COVER IT UP**
- like David did (2 Samuel 11,12)
- **DENY IT**
- like Gehazi (2 Kings 5:20-26)

or you can:

- **CONFESS IT**
- like the prodigal (Lk. 15:17-19)
- **REPENT OF IT**
- like Ninevah (Jonah 3:10)
- **FORSAKE IT**
- like Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8)
- **WASH IT AWAY**
- like Paul (Acts 22:16)

-by Jim Martin

Neglected Warnings

Theft prevention experts now believe that those loud noise producing alarms on cars are ineffective. In fact, they claim that installing one of those devices on your auto is a waste of time and money. But why? Do they fail too often in actual use? No. Do the sirens, bells, and horns fail to make a sufficient level of noise? No. Well then, what's the problem?

The problem is that there are now so many of the alarms, and so many of them are accidentally set off, that no one pays any attention to them any more. How often have you heard one of those, and thought to yourself: "Oh, that's just another one of those silly alarms going off. Nothing to worry about. I just hope the poor owner finds out before his battery runs down!" It is very much like the little boy who cried "wolf". After a number of false alarms, no one is ready to respond when a real situation develops.

We were thinking that there may be a spiritual lesson for us here. God's word is full of warnings and admonitions. It instructs us in the ways that we should go, and it plainly cautions about sin and its consequences. Preachers, teachers, elders, and faithful Christians are in the business of sounding out these warnings — for their own sakes and for the benefit of all others. However, when these alarms are consistently ignored, they begin to lose their effectiveness. People begin to think: "Don't worry about that. That's just the preacher doing his thing. No reason to get so upset about it."

Hebrews 3:13 cautions us about the "deceitfulness of sin", and warns about letting our hearts become "hardened". Pay attention to the alarms — your soul is in danger!

- by Greg Gwin