

## The Message of the Empty Seat

*John Isaac Edwards*

**J**onathan said to David, “To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty” (1 Samuel 20:18). One problem facing the church today is that of empty seats. The empty seat says...

### *Some Are Not Putting First Things First.*

Jesus taught, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom, the Lord’s church, is to come first before everything else. Whenever my seat is empty, does it say my priorities are mixed up?

*Some Are of Little Faith.* The context of Matthew 6:33 finds Jesus talking about folks who were worried about the material things of life. In verse 30 Jesus said, “Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” The Lord assures us that as we put the church first He will take care of us. One reason seats are empty is that of folks not having enough faith in the Lord and His word.

*Some Do Not Properly Value Their Influence.* Whether we realize it or not, all of us possess influence. The Lord declared, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). My at-

tendance, or lack thereof, has tremendous influence on others. Think about your influence on your fellow members, your family, visitors, new converts, and the like when your seat is empty. Wouldn’t it be tragic if your lack of attendance influenced others to not attend?

*Some Do Not Love the Lord.* Hebrews 10:25 shows attendance to be a command of God. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Obedience is proof of our love for the Lord. Jesus revealed, “If a man love me, he will keep my words...” (John 14:23). To forsake the assembling is to disobey the Lord!

### *Some Are Not Building Up the Church.*

Each member of the Lord’s body has responsibility to supply a part to build up the church (Ephesians 4:10-16). Faithful attendance on the part of each member goes a long way in making the church a growing church!

*Some Are Sick, Have Moved Away or Died.* Let’s not overlook the point that some seats are empty because folks are sick. Do these know we care? Some folks have moved away or passed away. When the faithful are gone, they are truly missed. Let us work to fill these seats with new converts by teaching others the will of God (2 Timothy 2:2).

# What We Must Do with Truth

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**P**ilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). The Bible echoes back the answer, “...thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Let’s notice what we must do with truth.

**Buy It.** The wise man exclaimed, “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23). The Bible is a gold mine just waiting to be discovered! If you don’t have a Bible, buy one!

**Know It.** God expects men to know His will! Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Paul revealed, “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4). We come to know the truth as we read and study the word of God (Ephesians 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:15).

**Believe It.** 2 Thessalonians 2:12 records, “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” This is why the Bible often speaks of the necessity of faith (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6). As we read the truth and hear the truth preached, we must believe it!

**Love It.** There will be a lot of people lost because of not loving the truth. Paul told the Thessalonians, “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). The Psalmist uttered, “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psalm 119:127). Do you love the truth?

**Obey It.** The truth is of little value unless we obey it! It is one’s obedience to the truth that purifies his soul, as Peter declared, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” (1 Peter 1:22). Those who are “...contentious, and do not obey the truth...” will suffer tribulation and anguish (Romans 2:8). Only those who obey the truth “...have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” of heaven (Revelation 22:14).

**Speak It.** It is written, “He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit” (Proverbs 12:17). The Ephesians were admonished, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth” (Ephesians 4:15). We must speak the truth, no matter what the cost!

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