

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. - 1 Peter 2:2

# THE SINCERE MILK OF GOD'S WORD

The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword... - Hebrews 4:12

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## Why Saints Assemble

**Hebrews 10:24-25:** *Let's consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching.*

God commands us to assemble with saints. As with all New Testament commands, this is the first reason it must be obeyed. As the saying goes, "God said it; that settles it" (cf. **1 John 5:3**). Yet, as with many commands, God not only tells us *what* to do, but gives reasons *why* to do it.

Notice the command in **Hebrews 10** includes "*consider how to provoke one another to love and good works.*"

A primary reason we must assemble is because we are considering the needs of others. Considering one another should lead us to *exhort* one another and *edify* one another (cf. **1 Thess. 5:11**).

Notice **1 Corinthians 14:12**. The saints there were instructed concerning the use of miraculous gifts that were given prior to the completion of the written Word. Though the context was different, the principle of edification still stands. "*Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.*"

While assembling together builds up *each other*, the One we seek to obey and please in our assemblies is *God*.

To please God in worship, things must be done *His way*. **Matthew 15:9** illustrates that it is possible to worship God *in vain*. **Acts 17:23** illustrates that it is possible to worship God *in ignorance*. Neither of these is acceptable to God.

In **John 4:23-24**, Jesus taught how we must worship. A Samaritan woman asked Him whether one should worship in Jerusalem, as the Jews did, or at Mount Gerizim, as the Samaritans did.

Jesus gave this answer: *But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.*

We must worship *God* from the *heart* while doing what *He* has commanded.

This opposes self-focused worship devised by man. Worship is about *God*.

Christians come together to break bread (**Acts 20:7**), give (**1 Cor. 16:1-2**), pray (**Acts 2:42**), sing (**Eph. 5:19**), and study (**Acts 20:7**) because that's what God shows us pleases *Him*.

May we remember the *why* God gives us for assembling, and do that which He teaches glorifies Him and edifies others.

## “Your Church Doesn’t Have Special Christmas Services?”

It is often expected that any religious group which recognizes Jesus as the Son of God will have special services during the Christmas season to celebrate Jesus’ birth.

Yet, Scripture does not tell us what day of the year Jesus was born on. Moreover, God never commands us to celebrate Jesus’ birth in this way man’s chosen to. Scripture tells of God the Son coming to earth (**Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20**), but there is no mention of Christmas, nor is there a command for churches to pick a day of the year to remember Jesus’ birth above all other days.

Jesus *did* establish a special memorial for the church to observe in remembrance of Him (**Luke 22:19**). This is not Christmas (or Easter), but what the Holy Spirit calls the “*Lord’s supper*” (**1 Cor. 11:20**). The Lord’s supper was observed in the New Testament on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). It is interesting how many neglect following this observance established by Jesus Himself, yet eagerly practice a celebration of Jesus established by fallible men.

This does not demean the importance of God the Son coming to earth, or suggest we can’t thank God for this on Christmas day (as with any other day). Nor does it imply that there is anything wrong with individuals celebrating Christmas in a non-religious way.

These points *do*, though, remind us of the difference between commands of God and manmade traditions promoted *as though* they are from God (**Mark 7:7**).

Christ’s Word specifies the worship He desires of the local church. May we simply submit to His pattern, remembering the words of **2 John 9**, “*Whoever transgresses and doesn’t remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn’t have God. He who remains in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*”

## “Sojourners and Pilgrims”

Scripture uses a number of figures and metaphors to paint portraits for us that illustrate what being a disciple of Christ is about. Among these is the phrase “*sojourners and pilgrims*” used in **1 Peter 2:11**.

These words emphasize the fact that this world is not our permanent home. The faithful Christian understands that while our time on earth has great significance, it is a temporary pilgrimage. We may have temporal citizenship of some place on earth, but ultimately “*our citizenship is in heaven*” (**Phil. 3:20**). Given that Christians are sojourners and pilgrims on earth, we ought not “*mind earthly things*” like those condemned in **Philippians 3:19**. Instead, we should set our “*affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” (**Col. 3:2**).

Since this world is not our permanent home, sojourners and pilgrims must refrain from the *worldliness* most people are given to. This is connected to the exhortation in **1 Peter 2:11**.

After referencing Christians as “*sojourners and pilgrims*,” the inspired apostle Peter commanded, “*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*” The lusts of the flesh are of the world (**1 John 2:16**), but the Christian sojourner is not. Sojourners and pilgrims live in the world, but are not of the world. Christ’s faithful followers belong to God, rather than to the world (cf. **John 17:15-17**).

The differences of those who don’t belong to the world are noticed by those who *do*. These differences are not something to be ashamed of, but can help lead those in darkness to the light (cf. **1 Pet. 2:12**).

This isn’t to say that the differences in the lives of sojourners yield no hardships. Many who are of the world show hatred toward those who are not (**John 15:18-19**). Overcoming this is aided by ever looking to the *permanent* dwelling place of the faithful (cf. **2 Cor. 4:18**).

**-Michael Hickox (all articles)**

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