

600 Pounds Of Ping Pong Balls (Church) (Serving God) (Working Together)

But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. James 2:18

The Basic Bible Truth

Nothing that we can do can possibly impress God, and cause Him to say that we have earned our spot in Heaven. Our very best is nothing to an infinite God. Our access to Heaven is based solely on the person of Jesus and what He did for us when He went to the cross and paid the price for our sins. However, God does expect us to show our faith through good works. The good we do should be a natural outgrowth of a close walk with Him. It should never be seen as a requirement for admission into eternal home. We love others because He first loved us. It is as simple as that.

The Object

A Specially Constructed Wood Beam
2 Saw Horses
A Metal Basket
3 Ping Pong Balls Labeled "200 Pounds"



Admittedly, this may be an object lesson that few will try to reproduce. But I have faithfully included my entire repertoire on this web site. This will require some woodworking skills, and some knowledge of wiring and electromagnets. Essentially what I have done, is to construct a fairly nice looking beam of wood that hides a very big secret. The beam can be "opened" and inside is a maze of 12 volt electrical components that allow me to switch a 12 volt electromagnet on and off using a car remote. The premise of the object lesson is that when all three ping pong balls are placed together in the metal basket, their cumulative weight skyrockets to an incredible 600 pounds, and cannot be lifted by a normal person.

I suspend the beam between two saw horses, have two adults sit on the ends of the beam as "observers"

to ensure that nothing tricky is going on here. They are actually there to provide ballast to keep someone from lifting the entire beam up. Then the metal basket is placed on the center of the beam. I even go so far as to have a little doily for them to set it on. That ensures that the basket is centered, because directly below the basket, deftly hidden inside the beam, is a 12 volt electromagnet with 1,000 pounds of pull when energized. I have an accomplice in the audience that has been instructed to energize the magnet whenever all three ping pong balls are in the basket and de-energize it when even one is taken out. When the magnet is energized, it is physically impossible to lift the basket off of the wood beam.

The Lesson

One ping pong ball makes little difference in the ability of someone to lift the basket, and two seems to make little difference as well. But when the third one is placed in close proximity to the others, something unexplainable happens. You can take this lesson a couple of different directions from this point. My favorite is to point out the God has said that when two or more of us are gathered together in His name, he will be there also. The first two ping pong balls represent two of us. The third, represents Jesus. The result is astonishing. 600 pounds instantly keeps the basket on the wood beam, with no chance of lifting it up.

There are a number of reasons that we should attend and be a part of a local church. First and foremost, God said so. That stands alone as reason enough. End of discussion. Let's get in the car and go home.

If you need more than that, you may have a spiritual problem that needs to be addressed. But there are advantages for the Christian who does attend church and does not just sit as a spectator, but gets involved. The key here is involvement. At the moment of our conversion, God gives each of us a spiritual gift. That gift is given with a goal in mind. We are to use that gift in the church, in cooperation with other people who also have their individual gifts, and work together to accomplish great things for God. He uses the picture in the New Testament of a human body. Many parts working together to move and breath and live. The church likewise is many parts, each unique, but necessary for proper function.

Consider the concept of playing baseball. It's difficult to swing a bat with only one arm. With only one eye, depth perception fails and it becomes impossible to judge the distance and speed of the pitch. Only one leg makes the running of the bases a huge challenge. We need all of our parts to play a good game. The church needs all of her parts as well, and God has strategically placed people in the church for specific purposes. We need to learn what our specific gift is, develop it, and then use it for His kingdom.

The local church fills other needs in our lives as well. We were created as social beings. We need relationships to function well. Sitting in a fishing boat on Sunday morning and watching the sunrise may make us feel close to God for a moment, but there is little to no social interaction there, and whether we want to admit it or not, God created us with a need that only the presence of other people can fill in our lives. We have all seen, or at least heard, of examples of the odd behaviors established by those who completely withdraw from society and social interaction. I recall, as a young man, hearing and reading about the richest man in the world at the time, Howard Hughes. A man with everything at his fingertips, and an amazing intellect, withdrew from everyone and lived as a very wealthy recluse. And died a very miserable, lonely man. He finished his life poorly. We need others—Christian others—who can challenge us and correct us if necessary.

We need a reminder from time to time who God is and our place in His plan. The world we live in is going to try to get our attention away from things spiritual and fill that void with anything that it can. We can easily get caught up in the lights and glitter of the excitement of the world. Satan is the greatest showman who ever lived and can quite easily distract us from what is really important in life. We need to focus on God and what He has to offer. When our children were young, we enrolled them in team sports in the

community. Specifically, soccer. Our oldest, our son, played from the time he was 4 or 5 years old through high school. If you have ever been around a community league team, as the age bracket rises, so does the possibility of having to travel to neighboring towns to play games. When he started playing years ago, it was unthinkable for a league team to play a game on a Sunday afternoon. But very gradually, something changed. First, it was a “make-up game” that was scheduled “just once” on a Sunday afternoon. A year or two later, a game or two was scheduled for a Sunday afternoon. I vividly remember the weekend we found ourselves at a tournament that scheduled the final game for the top two teams for Sunday morning at 11:00. Our son chose to not play in that game and risked losing his place on the team, rather than compromise his convictions. Today, I teach a 6th-7th grade Sunday School class, and it is not uncommon during the sports seasons, to have half of the class out due to scheduled tournament games. God has described Himself as a still, small voice, a whisper. In the noise of today, that whisper is sometimes difficult to hear. Church gives us an organized, purposed time to reflect on God and his goodness. We need that structure.

Growth for the Christian occurs in many ways. Daily devotions are a wonderful thing. Listening to a sermon is a wonderful thing. But what I have noticed in my own life is that I tend to ignore my shortcomings. It is convenient for me to overlook things in my life that need to be addressed. I don’t know that I don’t know what I don’t know. I am a woodworker by trade, and in my specific area of expertise, we do things with wood that are beyond the scope of what most people have ever seen. I recall a new employee who came into the shop, confident that he understood everything about woodworking and that there was probably very little that I could teach him. After all, he had 25 years of working experience in a cabinet shop under his belt. His first day was a very humbling experience. He learned of a hardwood from Africa called padauk that must be kept out of any bright sunlight. Freshly machined padauk is a bright orange color, and is highly reactive to ultraviolet light. If two unmatched pieces are laid on top of one another for any length of time, a shadow will form on the lower piece that is extremely difficult to remove. So we keep the wood under black plastic, removing only to machine. The wood has a pigment in it that with prolonged contact to moisture on the skin, will tint the skin and hair pink. And it does not wash out. He learned that when gluing padauk, you must budget at least double the normal glue drying time. The chemicals in the fiber of the wood slow the process down greatly. He then watched a huge, semi-automatic wood lathe turn a 10 foot, 12 inch diameter, 800 pound intricate hardwood column from a solid, glued up, block of padauk. He came to me at the end of the day, admitting that he had come in confident of his knowledge of wood and his ability to work with it, but that he was going home with a renewed excitement that he had a job where he was going to learn things about woodworking that he had no clue even existed 24 hours ago. In the church, we will have the opportunity to meet those who may be much farther along in their walk with the Lord, and there will be things we can learn from them, simply by rubbing shoulders with them in the context of the church relationship.

A healthy church is a place filled with a family like atmosphere. Yes, there are moments of friction and disagreement, but those are fleeting and give way to laughter and joy and belonging. I grew up in a healthy family environment. I know first hand what that looks like. And I assure you, there is nothing quite like it. Being a part of a church gives us the opportunity to experience that joy. I had a friend in grade school who had spent his early years in an orphanage in Korea. He and his sister were adopted into a loving family that lived across the street from me when I was young. Do not ever underestimate the value of a family relationship. He clung to the concept of family. He had seen both sides, and much preferred a mother and a father and a family. We need each other. We spur each other on to maturity. And we actually are family—we are all God’s children.

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.