



Taken for Granted

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by Jeremiah Shawver
Youth Pastor

In November, my wife and I were in India, and Lisa ended up stuck in there until January. The place where we were staying had few churches, and each Sunday, we went about our day as every other day. We didn't know where the churches were or how to speak the language.

Having returned from India, I got to be with you all in worship beginning in December. I have a confession to make: I had taken church for granted. I wouldn't have known this had I not been in India for four Sundays. I would not have known it if I had not missed out on taking communion with the body of Christ. I would not have known it if you weren't visible by screen only.

I realized this mistake during worship. It had been one month since I was in a room with other Christians singing to and about Jesus. Lisa and I had sung some hymns to our daughters in India, but not with any other believers. Being in India in a jungle city, we felt isolated and alone, even as we received encouragement from afar. Hearing you all sing was a reminder of what we had missed.

It was not that the service was perfect. It was not that the songs chosen were my favorite or that every person in the church sang each note to perfection.

Instead, each Sunday was a common Sunday. It was just like every other church service, with the addition of lighting the Advent candles in December. That is where the beauty is. In the common Sunday service, we take part in a communion together and with God. We sing to Christ of his grace and remind each other of the comfort we have received from our great Savior.

It was this I had taken for granted. I had spent 30 years going to church multiple times a week and thinking nothing of it. Sometimes the songs were better than others. There were fantastic sermons, mediocre sermons, and bad sermons. There were times in church I knew everyone and times when I knew no one. I have been able to worship across styles and denominations. Yet each Sunday, with all these differences, was the same. The people take part in fellowship, worship, the teaching of the apostles, prayer, and often communion and baptism.

It is easy to get used to the common or mundane things in life. We grow accustomed to our families being near us, so we assume we will always be with them. Since my dad passed away, the things I miss about him are not extraordinary experiences; I miss his conversation and presence. I have not missed vacations or presents but sitting down for dinner and working together in our

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yard. It is the common things – the ones I found boring as a child – that I now miss.

I found the same to be true in church. In India, I did not find myself longing for some amazing experience in church; I wasn't missing the perfectly planned and executed transitions from one song to the next; I missed being with the people of God and singing to our Savior. I missed having simple conversations before and after service. Each week I had grown accustomed to the worship, preaching of the Word, and administering communion and baptism. It was not until I could not take part that I realized how great an opportunity each Sunday is.

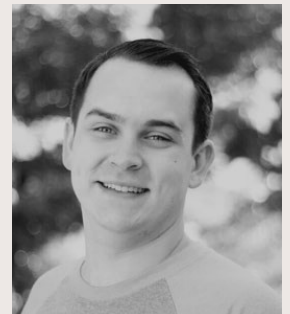
This quote struck me:

Christian worship offers an incomparable consolation in those moments when we feel like we are islands unto ourselves. Repeating our forefathers' sacred practices with their enduring resonance reminds us that the Lord's army is larger than a few clusters of Christian soldiers.

In both our spectacular Sundays and our mundane Sundays, we are reminded of the faith passed down through the saints, and we are connected to churches around the world. We also find that as we worship our Savior, we build each other up. Each Sunday, I have been built up by your worship. As we sang on that first Sunday, tears filled my eyes because I realized what I had missed, not only while in India but also every Sunday that I took the church for granted, and that for years, I had been encouraged and built up by the saints and didn't know it. So I confess I have taken you for granted; I have focused on myself rather than the body of Christ.

My prayer is that I will remember the beauty of our mundane worship... that I will not take for granted the simple worship of our wonderful Savior. I pray that the same is true for you: that we will all come to realize the blessing we have each and every Sunday.

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Jeremiah Shawver, Youth Pastor
Email: Jeremiah@parksidevisalia.org

*Harold Ristau, *Spiritual Warfare for the Care of Souls*. Lexham Press 2022. Pg. 7-8.