The Benefits of Assembling

An article by Paul Caron examines a Christianity Today Book Review: More Than a Magic Pill, by Kathryn Butler (M.D. Columbia) (reviewing Rebecca McLaughlin, How Church Could (Literally) Save Your Life (2025)). McLaughlin's book is written to address the needs of females, but I suggest the same could be properly apportioned to males as well.

Caron notes that McLaughlin declares there is something one can do to lengthen physical lifespan. According to McLaughlin, "the script is for something that—if taken at least weekly—could elongate your life expectancy by seven years, significantly increase your chance of happiness, and substantially reduce the likelihood you'll suffer from depression." McLaughlin outlines compelling research on the physical and mental health benefits of church attendance. She draws heavily from the work of Tyler VanderWeele, professor of epidemiology and director of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University's T. H. Chan School of Public Health.

According to Caron, the findings are striking. Church attendance reduces all-cause mortality by nearly 30 percent over a 15-year period and protects woman against suicide by 400 percent. Weekly churchgoing in women over 40 is as protective against death as annual mammograms, McLaughlin writes. Those attending services more than weekly at age 20 have "a roughly seven-year greater life expectancy than their non-churchgoing peers." Churchgoing protects against alcohol, smoking, and drug abuse and decreases the odds of depression by one-

third. Again, even though McLaughlin's book focuses toward the health of women, I put forward that such could have the same effect on men.

Whereas it may be physically advantageous to assemble to worship the God of Heaven, most certainly God has always expected His people to come together to worship Him. "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of the law" (Deuteronomy 31:12). "For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eight day, you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it" (Leviticus 23:36). "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song" (Psalm 149:1).

We as Christians can certainly see the need for assembling to worship God as we look to the example of the first Christians in Acts 20:7 where Luke records, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." Paul furthers the necessary importance of coming together, writing to the Corinthians, "On the first day of the week..." (1 Corinthians 16:2). In addition, the Hebrew writher exhorts, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..." (Hebrews 10:25). Assembling together to worship God most definitely fulfills a well-defined role for the submissive servant. Assembling here upon the earth provides a certain understanding of what it will be like when we assemble forever at the Throne of God, worshipping Him for all eternity. Let us fulfill our duty here, so that we may continue worshipping Him there.

Caron, P. (December 7, 2025). https://taxprofblog.aals.org/2025/12/07/how-church-could-literally-save-your-life/

McLaughlin, R. (2025). How Church Could (Literally) Save Your Life. Crossway.