

# Gen. Colin Powell Dies, Leaves Complicated Legacy

10/31/2021

Dear Teacher,

Gen. Colin Powell, who rose to high government positions throughout his career, is being remembered after his recent death, not only for his service to the country, but for one decision that he himself saw as a stain on his record. We discuss the importance of owning our mistakes, and examine the complexities of legacies left by imperfect human beings.

If you'd prefer a different topic, look at our second lesson, which responds to a pastor's blog addressed to former church attendees who have not returned as churches have reopened. We consider the relative importance of church attendance to our spiritual lives.

You are welcome to email the student version of either lesson to your class members, depending on which lesson you prefer to use for your class time. To do so, click here (<http://www.thewiredword.com/subscriber/studentlist.aspx>).

May God bless you as you teach the scriptures this week.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



## Gen. Colin Powell Dies, Leaves Complicated Legacy

*The Wired Word* for the Week of October 31, 2021

### In the News

Four-star Army Gen. Colin Powell died October 18 at age 84 from complications of Covid-19. Medical experts noted that while Powell had been fully vaccinated, his advanced age and history of multiple myeloma (a blood cancer) and Parkinson's disease, placed him at a higher risk with regard to the coronavirus.

Until Barack Obama was elected president, Powell was the highest-ranking black person in government, serving in multiple administrations in various roles, including as U.S. Secretary of State, National Security Adviser, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But "Iraq was always going to be the first line of Powell's obituary," wrote journalist Philip Elliott, referencing the speech Powell gave February 5, 2003, to the United Nations Security Council. In it, Powell laid out the George W. Bush administration's case for war that was based on faulty intelligence claiming that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Other government leaders, including the president, members of Congress, the Cabinet, and military commanders in the field had offered the same rationale for launching an attack against Iraq, but it was Powell's willingness to put his reputation on the line that persuaded some who still had misgivings.

Six weeks after Powell's U.N. presentation, the United States invaded Iraq, but it was found that Iraq's nuclear WMD program had been put on hold, and the chemical WMDs were stockpiled but not currently being manufactured. The war, which caused 36,500 American casualties and an unknown number of Iraqi deaths and injuries, continued until 2011.

In a 2005 *ABC News* interview, Powell told Barbara Walters that his U.N. speech was "painful" for him and a permanent "blot" on his record.

Conservative strategist, Jaime Watt, wrote: "That kind of admission ... is exceedingly rare if not extinct in political life today. Nowadays, public figures are given almost no leeway for forgiveness. It has become the norm to assume that when a political leader screws up, it was intentional; that there is some kind of malfeasance at play. We have forgotten that we are governed by human beings, who like all of us, sometimes simply make mistakes."

Some have observed that a proverb Powell shared with Bush in a 2002 briefing on Iraq came to define his own legacy: Known as "the Pottery Barn" rule, named for a retail store, Powell told Bush, "You break it, you own it." At the time, Powell was probably talking about a nation's responsibility for damage caused to other nations. But in retrospect, the maxim might also apply to taking responsibility for damage one might cause to one's own reputation or to the reputation of one's nation.

"My pattern throughout my life is when things go not quite the way you want it, you have to learn from the experience and then move on," the pragmatic general said.

History will judge the reluctant warrior's legacy.

"I came into the army to be a soldier, not a general," Powell told one journalist. "Any time they had told me, 'You've been a soldier for long enough. You can go home now,' I would have gone home happy."

More on this story can be found at these links:

Colin Powell and the Transformative Power of Owning Your Mistakes. *TIME*

(<https://time.com/6107901/colin-powell-legacy/>)

Colin Powell, U.S. Military Leader and First Black Secretary of State, Dies. *Reuters*

(<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/obituary-colin-powell-us-military-leader-first-black-secretary-state-dies-2021-10-18/>)

The Event Colin Powell Long Regretted. *CNN* (<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/19/opinions/the-event-colin-powell-long-regretted-bergen/index.html>)

When Considering Colin Powell's Legacy We Should Look Not to His Mistakes, But to His Very Public Regret About the Iraq War. *Toronto Star* (<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2021/10/24/when-considering-colin-powells-legacy-we-should-look-not-to-his-mistakes-but-to-his-very-public-regret-about-the-iraq-war.html>)

## **The Big Questions**

1. What is the difference, if any, between a mistake and a sin?
2. Should we treat people who have made mistakes or errors in judgment (our own, or those of others) differently than we treat ourselves or other people who have sinned? Why or why not? If so, in what way?
3. When a person's pledge of loyalty to a nation, a family or an organization conflicts with one's conscience, how should that conflict be resolved?
4. What might hinder us from owning up to mistakes we have made?
5. What resources has God provided to help us see the truth about our mistakes, and to take whatever steps we can to ameliorate or lessen harmful effects of those mistakes?

## **Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope**

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

## **2 Chronicles 18:12-13**

*The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably." But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak."* (For context, read 1 Chronicles 18:1-22, 33-34 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Chronicles+18%3A1-22%2C+33-34&version=NRSV>).)

King Jehoshaphat of Judah allied himself with King Ahab of Israel. When Ahab inquired whether Jehoshaphat would join him in a war against his enemy, Ramoth-gilead, Jehoshaphat agreed, provided they first asked what God thought of the idea.

So Ahab gathered 400 prophets together, who all gave him the advice they thought he wanted to hear: Go to war, and you'll definitely succeed!

Jehoshaphat inquired whether there wasn't another prophet of the Lord who might be consulted. Ahab admitted that there was another, Micaiah, who had earned Ahab's contempt, because he never gave him the counsel he wanted.

At Jehoshaphat's urging, Ahab summoned Micaiah, who was warned to side with the 400 prophets who all supported Ahab's war plan. But Micaiah was determined to say only what God told him to say, even if he was punished for telling the truth. He told Ahab that his 400 prophets were lying, and that his military campaign would fail.

Ahab rejected Micaiah's prophecy, and in the ensuing battle, was killed.

When rulers must decide whether to go to war, they must rely on information they receive from trusted sources. Sometimes that information is useful, and other times it is faulty. Determining which information is likely to produce a positive outcome, and which could prove disastrous, is difficult, as this text and the 2003 decision to go to war with Iraq both demonstrate.

**Questions:** How much weight, if any, should be given to "lone voices" or whistleblowers, when it would seem that everyone else contradicts their viewpoint? How should we determine whom to believe and which path to take in such a situation?

## **James 3:1-2**

*Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.* (For context, read James 3:1-5 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A1-5&version=NRSV>).)

This passage is not an exact parallel to the situation described in the news article. Colin Powell was not a teacher, but had a position of influence and authority, just as teachers do. So people might judge him "with greater strictness," because of his high position and reputation.

Powell himself recognized that he was not perfect, but had made mistakes, some of which had enormous consequences. He was candid about how his fumbles troubled him, and perhaps judged himself with even greater strictness than others did.

**Questions:** Since "all of us make many mistakes," who then is qualified to judge those in high positions? Is it possible for people who are also prone to make mistakes to judge them correctly? What procedures should we follow so that our judgments are as fair as humanly possible?

### **1 John 1:8-10**

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.* (For context, read 1 John 1:5-10 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+John+1%3A5-10&version=NRSV>).)

John bases this text on the preceding verses, in which he declares God's perfection ("God is light"). He connects darkness with lying, self-deception and sin, while light is connected with telling the truth about our sin.

The metaphor John uses of "walking in the light" is helpful. Psalm 38:16-18 connects the idea of sin with one's foot slipping and causing one to fall. Most people who are out walking don't intend to slip and fall. Presumably, most people don't start out life planning to make mistakes or to have a moral failure or to slip and fall into sin. But if we gravitate away from the light of God and walk in spiritual darkness, we are more likely to stumble, just as we are more apt to slip if we are taking a walk at night without the benefit of a flashlight.

**Question:** What is the relationship between confession of sin and walking in the light?

### **Psalm 19:8, 11-13**

*... the precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is clear,  
enlightening the eyes; ...  
Moreover by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.  
But who can detect their errors?  
Clear me from hidden faults.  
Keep back your servant also from the insolent;  
do not let them have dominion over me.  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.* (For context, read Psalm 19:7-14

(<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+19%3A7-14&version=NRSV>).)

The psalmist describes many benefits God's laws provide to those who pay attention to them. For instance, God's commands can provide clarity and light as we seek the right path forward. They may also warn of danger, the way road signs may tell us that we are approaching a sharp curve, steep hill, limited sight distance, narrow shoulder or tunnel.

We all find it difficult to see our own errors or hidden faults at times. TWW team member Joanna Loucky-Ramsey likes to participate in the sport of agility with her dog, Havel. She has learned to rely on the advice of more experienced athletes, who can tell her why one of her runs was not as successful as she had hoped, and

what she can do to avoid the mistake the next time. Loucky-Ramsey says it is always easier to see what other competitors can do better than to figure out what she did wrong on a course.

**Questions:** How can we make use of the scriptures to spot problem areas and potential errors before we make mistakes? What can Loucky-Ramsey's illustration from the world of dog agility teach us about how we can help one another avoid mistakes of greater consequence?

## For Further Discussion

1. At a recent ecumenical church service commemorating the 100th anniversary of the formation of Northern Ireland, Most Rev. John McDowell, The Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh, said: "As a church leader I am sorry (<https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/i-m-sorry-we-didn-t-do-more-to-become-peacemakers-says-archbishop-of-armagh-during-ni-centenary-church-service>) that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we didn't do more to become peacemakers, or at least to speak peace into the situation."

The moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Rt. Rev. Dr. David Bruce, lamented "the times when fear has held us back from building relationships with those with whom we differ."

The president of the Irish Council of Churches, Very Rev. Dr. Ivan Patterson admitted the failure of Christians "even to talk well together about the ways in which the past continues to affect us all, hampers [our young people] in addressing that unfinished work of peace so important for the future."

In his sermon to those assembled, the president of the Methodist Church in Ireland, Rev. Dr. Sahr Yambasu said they now had the opportunity "to imagine what could be, and to choose the way forward that can be mutually beneficial."

Billy Smith, a student at Armagh High School, presented a lantern containing a flame symbolizing the "Light of Hope" to the church leaders.

Of what value are such public acknowledgements of past mistakes by public figures, political or military leaders, and religious authorities?

2. In this blog post, "Learning from the Damaged David," (<https://friendsofjustice.blog/2021/10/24/learning-from-the-damaged-david/>) Alan Bean, executive director of Friends of Justice, writes that the story of David in the Bible is presented from at least four different perspectives. He is depicted as the Imperial David, the Robin Hood David, the Priestly David and the Damaged David. Bean demonstrates that a human's legacy is often complicated and multifaceted.

Think about this: How do you suppose people will remember you after you are gone? What might make your own legacy complicated and multifaceted?

Discuss this: What does the Bible teach us about how God views our complicated legacies? What, if anything, should we do when we are confronted by the impact our decisions and behavior have on others?

3. Discuss this, from LeRoy Eims, author of *The Lost Art of Disciplemaking*: "If you heed a warning sign [such as the "Check Engine Light" on your car's dashboard] ... , you can save yourself a lot of trouble ... "

Eims pointed to Paul's comments in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. 13-17 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Timothy+3%3A1-5%3B+13-17&version=NRSV>), where he mentions "danger signs that tell you you're not living a holy life and that you're slipping off the straight and narrow path onto the broad road that leads to destruction."

If you see any of these "warning signs in your own life," Eims says by facing up to them, repenting, and getting back on track, "you can save yourself some trouble."

How can you increase the chances that you will see warning signs to alert you to take action to prevent a catastrophic failure in your spiritual life? Which of the warning signs Paul mentions do you see especially prominent in the church and society today? What type of action should you take if you see such warning signs? What resources does Paul highlight that can help us identify and address potential problems before they derail our spiritual progress?

4. React to this, from motivational speaker Tom Peters: "People do not change until the pain of changing is less than the pain of staying the same."

### **Responding to the News**

Ask God to reveal hidden faults or mistakes in your life, and to show you what you need to do to avoid such errors in the future.

While not connected to this lesson, this is an important time to pray for missionaries that have been kidnapped in Haiti (<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/22/1048346773/haiti-gang-leader-kidnapped-missionaries-video>).

**Prayer** suggested by Psalm 25:5

O God of our salvation, lead us in your truth and teach us to humble ourselves, so that we might learn from our mistakes, and not repeat them. Amen.

### **Other News This Week**

## **In-Person Worship: How Many Will Return?**

*The Wired Word* for the Week of October 31, 2021

### **In the News**

"There were many weeks throughout the pandemic that we only attended church," wrote Rev. Matthew Ian Fleming, of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, in a blog this month on the *Church Anew* site. "It was our only outing, our only encounter with real faces and voices and eyes. Over other exposure, we chose church because it grounded our family in a rhythm that was beyond what we were experiencing," he said.

"As soon as church opened, we came back, nervously, a bit uncertain and afraid," Fleming said. "But in this year of pandemic church, my kids have experienced some amazing happenings. They saw those first people returning to the building with tears in their eyes, just to be among the people, smelling familiar scents of carpet and brick, hearing organ and the voice of a preacher not filtered through tinny computer speakers." (Fleming, though a member of the church staff, is not the preaching pastor.)

It's no secret that attendance at houses of worship has taken a dive as leaders at such places have had to scramble over the last several months to accommodate suspensions of in-person services and then social distancing and other protective procedures when they reopened. An *AP News* article published in late June of this year noted, "As the pandemic recedes in the United States and in-person services resume, worries of a deepening slide in attendance are universal." And that was written right before the Delta variant of Covid-19 surged through the United States, causing yet another round of suspensions of in-person worship.

That article went on to report on some congregations that had been experiencing waning attendance before the pandemic for whom the required suspensions became the final blow that resulted in permanent closure.

So for many places of worship, it's likely to be people like Fleming and his family who will help determine whether in-person services return in strength.

For the moment, what in-person worship attendance will look like going forward remains to be seen.

One reason is that the forced separation from congregational life has led some people to discover that they *like* not going to worship services. Another writer on the *Church Anew* site, Lutheran pastor Natalia Terfa, used her October 13 blog to publish an open letter "to those who haven't come back to church," in which she acknowledged that for many who had been churchgoers, the pandemic became kind of a "reset" that caused some to reevaluate the "had to" aspect of church attendance.

"Maybe you weren't sure why you were going, or if it was something you even wanted to do in the first place, but week after week you found yourself getting to church on Sunday morning," Terfa wrote. "And then you discovered that not going felt better than going on most Sundays. ... So you haven't come back," she said, adding that "there might not even be a 'yet' on the end of that sentence."

Terfa didn't chide those folks. In fact, she basically issued a free pass, saying, "I meant it when I told you the church was the people, the relationships, the wondering together about God and faith and life." She added, "So too, I mean it when I say you don't have to come back to church if you don't want to. If you can't, won't or aren't sure yet, it's ok."

And she closed by saying, "God has always and will continue to meet you where you are."

Fleming wrote his article in response to Terfa's, and said that he too understood the feelings of those who hadn't returned to church, but he didn't sign the free pass.

"God searches and finds us wherever we are," Fleming said. "But God also gathers us."

And that's "because we need it," Fleming said. "Because the church is us. It isn't an abstraction, and it isn't a building. It isn't a theology or an ideology. It's you and me, our hopes and fears and dreams and longings, our failures and disappointments and anxieties. And God is still moving this imperfect institution, still calling us forward, and still doing something wonderful in these walls, through our bandwidth, in the woods and in the workplace."

So "isn't it better to see it all together?" Fleming asked.

A Pew Research Center survey conducted September 20-26, 2021, found "that a growing share of Americans are now attending religious services in person. Among those who say they typically attend services at least once or twice a month, a clear majority (64%) report that they actually have gone in person in the past month, the first time that has been the case in three surveys conducted since the pandemic began."

What's more, according to Pew Research, "The resumption of in-person attendance has been accompanied by a decline in the share of both U.S. adults overall and regular worshipers who say they have watched religious services online or on TV in the past month."

More on this story can be found at these links:

What I Learned From Attending Church in the Pandemic. *Church Anew*

(<https://churchanew.org/blog/posts/matthew-ian-fleming-what-i-learned-from-attending-church-in-the-pandemic>) Millions Skipped Church During Pandemic. Will They Return? *AP News*

(<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-pandemics-lifestyle-health-religion->

cd5fbac2318cb58e1d5ec4a5d1c00ecc)

An Open Letter to Those Who Haven't Come Back to Church. *Church Anew*

(<https://churchanew.org/blog/posts/natalia-terfa-an-open-letter-to-those-who-havent-come-back-to-church>)

Most Americans Who Go to Religious Services Say They Would Trust Their Clergy's Advice on Covid-19 Vaccines. *Pew Research Center* (<https://www.pewforum.org/2021/10/15/most-americans-who-go-to-religious-services-say-they-would-trust-their-clergys-advice-on-covid-19-vaccines/>)

## The Big Questions

1. During the time in-person worship was suspended, did you like not going to church? Why or why not? If you liked some aspects of the non-attendance and disliked some others, how do you weigh which one was more valuable?
2. If your church provided online services or some other arrangement to continue worship during that time, did you participate? Why or why not?
3. During that time, what did you gain spiritually? What did you miss spiritually?
4. What is your reaction to Terfa's "free pass" and why do you feel that way?
5. To what degree is living a Christian life an individual endeavor? To what degree is it a faith community endeavor?

## Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

### Psalm 139:7-10

*Where can I go from your spirit?*

*Or where can I flee from your presence?*

*If I ascend to heaven, you are there;*

*if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*

*If I take the wings of the morning*

*and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,*

*even there your hand shall lead me,*

*and your right hand shall hold me fast.*

(For context, read Psalm 139:1-18 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A1-18&version=NRSV>).)

As a meditation on God's nearness and intimacy, this psalm challenges our thinking and experience and discloses profound truth. It also reinforces Terfa's statement that "God has always and will continue to meet you where you are."

**Questions:** As long as "God has always and will continue to meet you where you are," why does in-person worship matter? Why might we sometimes wish there was a place where God cannot meet us?

### Exodus 20:8

*Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.* (For context, read Exodus 20:1-17

(<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+20%3A1-17&version=NRSV>).)



If we are looking for a biblical directive to attend church, we might start with this commandment, one of the "big ten." But actually, nowhere in scripture does God say, "Go to church every Sunday." There are plenty of biblical examples of God telling the Israelites to worship him. For example, 2 Kings 17:35-36: "You shall not worship other gods or bow yourselves to them or serve them or sacrifice to them, but you shall worship the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm; you shall bow yourselves to him, and to him you shall sacrifice." But those verses are really talking about the ancient sacrificial system, which was something different from how we worship God in church today.

Still, the commandment above seems to apply, especially if we count Sunday as the Christian equivalent of the Jewish Sabbath, but even then, Sabbath-keeping is something larger than attendance at a public worship service. It is the devotion of a whole day every week to God and our spiritual life and the work of God. It includes lifestyle changes for that day and family practices designed to remind us of our covenant with God. And there is the fact that the Gospels document Jesus as one who sometimes broke the Sabbath rules, doing such things as healing people on that day. As he put it, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Nonetheless, Christians typically understand the Sabbath command as part of the church-every-Sunday rationale.

**Questions:** In what ways does your attendance at church fit into the spirit of the weekly Sabbath? In what ways should we give *daily* attention to our faith?

### **Hebrews 10:24-25**

*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ...* (For context, read Hebrews 10:19-25 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+10%3A19-25&version=NRSV>).)

These two verses are the closest biblical reference we have to a command to attend Christian worship. But it's not a command; it's an exhortation. And why did the Hebrews author need to state this? Some Bible scholars think it was because the threat of persecution was keeping some believers at home, which might be somewhat equivalent to the pandemic threat keeping us away from in-person worship.

Notice that the writer of Hebrews says that one reason for continuing to meet is to encourage one another. That suggests that we need to continue to be part of a faith community both for what we receive and for what we contribute.

**Questions:** How, if at all, might the writer of Hebrews have worded these verses differently if the threat had been not persecution but pandemic? Besides upping the attendance statistics, what does your regular attendance in church contribute to the faith of others who also attend those worship services?

To what degree should a gathering of believers also be a ministry of encouragement?

Think of a church gathering where you especially felt the presence of God. In what ways did the worship convey that presence?

## **Luke 4:16**

*When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.* (For context, read Luke 4:14-21 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+4%3A14-21&version=NRSV>)).

There are examples in the Bible about attending worship. Luke tells us in the verse above that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and Acts reports that Paul had a similar practice (Acts 17:2 (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+17%3A2&version=NRSV>)).

The idea of "custom," which is synonymous with "habit," has echoes in philosophy. For example, ethical virtue has been defined as "a habit disposed toward action by deliberate choice" of behavior that avoids the pitfalls of being too lax or too strict. Customary -- but not slavish -- synagogue attendance fits in as an ethical virtue.

**Questions:** If the technology had been available in Jesus' day, do you think he would have worshiped online when in-person worship was not available? Explain your reasoning.

What role does custom or habit play in your spiritual development? In what ways is it a help? In what ways can it be a hindrance? Does attendance at in-person worship usually make your subsequent week go better? How can you tell?

## **For Further Discussion**

1. Respond to this, from a sermon by Texas pastor Charles Aaron: "Did we come to church this morning thinking it was a safe thing to do? Did we come with some expectation of receiving a blessing, a bit of comfort, but no real challenge? Did we think about the possibility that an encounter with Jesus would rearrange our lives, explode our priorities, cause us to give more than we ever expected? Did we think we could get a little something from Jesus, a dose of grace to help us through the week? Did we come for the fellowship, the music, the spiritual boost? No one can argue with those reasons."

Aaron continues, "The risen Christ, however, may have had other plans for this worship service. Christ may want to come under our skins and transform us. Christ may see through us so that something we have well hidden comes to the surface. Christ may kick out from under us the things we use to prop ourselves up, but that we don't really need. Are we ready for that? Did we bargain on that when we walked through the door today?"

2. If you participated in online worship, did it address your spiritual needs less than, more than or about the same as in-person worship? How do you account for your answer?

3. If you have recently returned to in-person worship, which of these statements best describes the experience?

- It was like putting on a comfortable sweater.
- It was like jumping into chilly water.
- It was like coming home after a long trip.
- It was like walking in shoes that were too small.
- It was like (state your own metaphor)

4. In the weeks after 9/11, there was a bump up in church attendance, but after a few weeks, attendance levels returned to about what they were pre-9/11. Might the pandemic bump down in attendance be a similar blip with levels eventually returning to approximately what they had been pre-pandemic? Explain your reasoning.
5. The pandemic has enabled many people to discover that they prefer to "disengage" from any congregational setting, including not only church, but also work, school, fraternal organizations, government, etc. Once the pandemic truly ends, what do you think the lasting impact will be on our systems and society?

### **Responding to the News**

This is a good time to think about how each of the elements of a typical worship service speak to your spiritual life, and to consider what God might be saying to you personally through those elements.

While not connected to this lesson, this is an important time to pray for missionaries that have been kidnapped in Haiti (<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/22/1048346773/haiti-gang-leader-kidnapped-missionaries-video>).

### **Prayer**

Thank you, O Lord, for the church and how it feeds us spiritually and in other ways. Let my participation in it contribute to your kingdom and to the faith community. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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