

## Missing in Action

In 1984, Chuck Norris starred in the action film *Missing in Action*. He portrayed Colonel James Braddock, a former prisoner of war who believed American soldiers were still being held captive in Vietnam. Though officials claimed no POWs remained, Braddock was convinced otherwise. He returned on a dangerous rescue mission to bring them home. The film's title described soldiers officially counted, yet absent from the battlefield.

The movie is filled with jungle battles and daring escapes, but at its heart was a sobering idea. Men who were supposed to be present on the battlefield were unaccounted for. They were in fact "missing in action." That phrase lingers in the mind. It describes someone who is officially counted, yet practically absent.

Sadly, it is possible for a Christian to be spiritually "missing in action." You can have your name in the church directory, yet in daily faithfulness, you may be absent from the very work you claim to support.

The Lord told the church at Sardis, *"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."* Revelation 3:1. They had reputation without reality. They appeared active yet were spiritually lifeless. Christians today can fall into the same condition. Present in name, absent from faithfulness. Consider three areas where Christians sometime go missing in action.

First area is missing from church services. The writer of Hebrews commands, *"not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching."* Hebrews 10:25.

Faithful attendance is not about checking a box. It is about strengthening one another. In the church, worship is congregational and participatory. Your presence builds unity. Your voice in song encourages others. When you are absent without cause, you weaken the very fellowship you claim to value. Attendance reflects priority, and not just for the morning worship service, but for all services scheduled by the elders for the benefit and edification of the saints. When assemblies become optional, spiritual decline follows.

Second area is missing from service in the church. Some attend regularly but never engage in the work. They observe but do not labor. Paul urged, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* 1 Corinthians 15:58. Notice the expectation is "always abounding." The church is described as a body with many members. 1 Corinthians 12:12. Every member has function. When one-part refuses to serve, the whole body feels the strain.

James warns, *"But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."* James 1:22. Agreement with truth is not enough. Faith must move you to action. In the church, we emphasize obedience. Not to earn salvation, but because true faith obeys. A saved heart serves. If your Christianity never costs you effort, time or sacrifice, you may be spiritually enlisted but missing in action from active duty.

Third area is missing from service to others. Christian service extends beyond the assembly. Jesus said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 5:16. Paul instructed, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* Galatians 6:10. If no one is strengthened by your kindness, encouraged by your words, or helped by your generosity, your light may be dim. Titus describes those who *“profess to know God, but in works they deny Him.”* Titus 1:16.

The encouraging truth is that “missing in action” does not have to be permanent. The Lord told Christians at Sardis, *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain.”* Revelation 3:2. If you have drifted, you can return. If you have grown complacent, you can renew your zeal. If you have neglected worship, service, or benevolence, you can step back into faithful action.

Be present. Be active. Be faithful. And by all means, do not be “missing in action.”

~Ron Josselet (Assisted by ChatGPT)