

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 3 NOVEMBER 2019



## 11 Reasons You Need to Belong to a Church

*Peter Adam*

### **1. Because you need the regular support and encouragement of Christian fellowship.**

The Christian life is not designed to be lived in isolation, and those who try it that way are likely to crash! (See Hebrews 3:12,13, 10:25; Colossians 3:16.)

### **2. Because fellowship provided by Christian friends is no substitute for belonging to a church.**

You choose your friends because their ideas and style are similar to your own. God puts different

people in a congregation so they can learn from each other. (See Titus 2:1-10.)

### **3. Because gifts can only rightly be used by someone who is a member of a congregation.**

Gifts are primarily for the congregation, not for the individual and are rightly used to build up the church. The picture of a church as a body tells us that our various gifts complement each other. You don't see a foot or an eye wandering around by itself! (See Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12.)

### **4. Because God's basic unit is the church, not the individual.**

The story of the Bible is that of God making, shaping and refining His people, beginning with Abraham. The lives of individuals like David, Isaiah, the Disciples, and Paul have their meaning because they are part of God's continuous community. It has lasted about 4,000 years – and there are no signs that God has changed His plan! (see Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:11-21.)

### **5. Because, without it, you are not paying the price of being a Christian.**

The 'solo flight' is a very attractive style of Christianity for some, but it evades a basic element, the cost of discipleship. Jesus called His followers to serve their community of faith...to be 'slave of all'. (see Mark 10:35-45; Ephesians 5:21.)

## 6. Because you cannot understand the New Testament properly unless you belong to a church.

Most of the New Testament is addressed to churches. If you only read the Bible privately, then you will not be in the right place to hear God's Word. You will 'privatise' its message, and so misunderstand it. (See most of Paul's letters.)

## 7. Because basic maturity in faith and knowledge is only found in the church.

The Bible clearly teaches that those who cannot cope with the church 'system' are immature (see Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17), and that maturity and fullness of faith are discovered as a corporate experience of the Christian community. (See Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:13-16.)

## 8. Because sharing in Baptism and the Lord's Supper is basic to Christian obedience.

We share in these sacraments because of the command of Christ. They are not private rites but corporate actions of the body of Christ. A 'grab and run' approach is wrong; sharing in them means belonging to a church. (See 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:17-34; 12:13.)

## 9. Because submitting to Christian leadership is integral to New Testament Christianity.

'Going-it-alone' is okay in the short term, but eventually we err if we imagine that we do not need structures and human authority. God's provision of order and authority in the church is His realistic way of helping us. (See Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17.)

*... maturity and fullness of faith are discovered as a corporate experience...*

## 10. Because ministry teams, evangelism teams, and Christian societies are no substitute for churches.

Special groups and teams are more exciting than churches, because they attract people of similar aims, ideas, and abilities. They do good work but are not the same as churches, because they are limited in membership and task oriented. Churches have to accept everyone, gifted or not, and so they more accurately reflect God's free grace. (See Titus 3:1-7.)

## 11. Because listening to sermons online is no substitute for receiving God's words in the church you belong to.

We are called to grow to maturity in churches, not only as individuals (see above). We need people to whom we are accountable for our hearing of God's words. The sermon you need to hear next Sunday is from your church minister, who loves you and prays for you. You cannot assess the lifestyle of the online preacher, so you cannot assess their message. In the same way, we present an edited version of ourselves online. It is people whom we meet who are better able to assess us and evaluate our lives. (See Hebrews 3:12-13; Acts 20:28; 2 Timothy 3:10-11)

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*



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Source: <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/11-reasons-need-belong-church/>

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