

# SUNDAY ARTICLE

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## Why Should We Come to Church?

*Richard Davis Phillips*

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

One of the greatest needs of our dark times is for the Christian church to regain her true identity and character. To understand what the church is designed to be, the best place to inquire is at its founding in the time of the apostles. Acts 2:42 describes the newborn church after the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven at Pentecost. The apostle Peter preached the message of Christ to the crowds and when many believed they gathered together as a church. What was the character of that church, we ask? Why did the early believers come to church? By extension, looking at the example, we can ask, Why and how should we come to church?

The first answer is given by the setting of the believers at Pentecost. They came to church *because they had been changed by the gospel of*

*Jesus as the Holy Spirit pierced their hearts.* Peter had proclaimed that Jesus, whom they had crucified, is the risen Lord and Savior (Acts 2:36). His hearers “were cut to the heart” and asked Peter, “what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). He answered, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:38). Combined in that answer is the sinner’s need to repent of sin and believe on Jesus for salvation and then the believer’s need to enter into God’s church through the sacrament of baptism. It is as they did this that the first Christians gathered as a church. They did not have to be rounded up and reminded that they should come to church, but they wanted to be in the meeting of God’s people for worship. We, too, should come to church because we have been saved by the blood of Christ, born again by the Holy Spirit, and called to gather together as the people of our Lord.

A second answer is that the believers came to church *in order to be taught the truths of God’s Word*: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42). Many people today find the sermon the least appealing reason to come to church. They come for social contacts, for entertainment, or for family obligations. But these are reasons why the world gathers, not reasons why Christ’s people are devoted to church attendance. In a sermon on this text, Martyn Lloyd-Jones explained several reasons why we should come to church especially for Bible teaching. First, one of the main signs of the Spirit’s presence is a desire for God’s Word, of which the Spirit himself is the Author. Therefore, true Christians love God’s Word and desire to be

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taught its doctrines. (If you look back at Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, you will find that it is remarkably filled with doctrine.) Second, Christians need to be protected from ignorance and empowered by biblical knowledge. Paul thus

wrote to Timothy that God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Third, Christians are to bear witness to Jesus in a lost and dark work, and for this we must be biblically taught. How else are we to share the gospel of Christ to friends? And where else is the gospel to be heard but in the church? Lloyd-Jones wrote: “We are living in evil

days. We are living in terrible days. There is only one hope for this world, and that is the church and her message...This is no time for entertainment. The world is on fire. The world is going to hell. And the church must come back to...the apostles' teaching."

A third reason Christians should come to church is to fellowship with other believers: "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). When our nature has been changed by the new birth in Christ we want to be with fellow believers. We are drawn to one another and therefore come to church as often as we can. We are drawn especially to the fellowship that we enjoy in worship, such as when we gather together at the Lord's Table.

Further, Acts 2:42 says the first believers came together for "the prayers." The definite article suggests that they came not merely for prayer but for special prayer gatherings. This is why the prayer meeting shows the spiritual strength of the church. But we also come to Lord's Day worship in order to pray together. We do not merely come to complain about life or about the evil world, but to pray to God for his Spirit to empower the gospel in order to save many. We pray for our own needs. We pray for God to be glorified. We pray for the great issues of our day and for the small concerns of our lives.

The record of the first church concludes in Acts by saying the believers gathered "with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47). This reminds us

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of a final reason to come to church: to glorify God in praise together with his people. God is worthy of the worship that we offer to him! To be sure, private and daily worship is both valid and important. But there is nothing quite like the praise given to God by the assembly of believers in a local church. We therefore should come to church "with glad and generous hearts" that are intent on giving Him glory.

What will happen if we come to church in the spirit of the early Christians? One answer is given at the end of this passage: "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). God does not always bless his people with the phenomenal growth the early church experienced. But this statement at least suggests that if we come to church not for worldly reasons but as a reflection of our changed lives, eager to hear and learn God's Word, excited to gather together, fervent in prayer and joyfully excited to give praise to God, then the world is bound to notice.



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*Source: [www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/09/why-should-we-come-to-church.php](http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2015/09/why-should-we-come-to-church.php)*

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