

How important is it to go to church? \* Q's from the pews  
August 25, 2019 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

When I first came to faith, I was what you might call a 'lone wolf' Christian. I had this idea in my head that I didn't really NEED to go to church because really, my faith was all about me and God. As long as I had Jesus, I thought, I didn't really need the Church.

As I grew though, I realized that that way of thinking really wasn't helpful and it really wasn't biblical either. Jesus and the Church are inseparable – the Church is His Body; He is the church's head – so if I'm going to identify with Him, that means that I need to identify with His Body – the church. I can't very well follow Jesus and ignore His followers. I can't very well be a child of God who ignores my brothers and sisters in Christ. If I love Jesus, then I need the Church.

So in a sense, I'm talking to myself twenty years ago when I answer today's question – just how important is it to go to church?

I know first-hand how easy it is to de-prioritize church. Sometimes bed's just so comfy on a Sunday morning. And there's sports events and brunch with friends and grocery shopping to be done - why should we make going to church a priority? Is it really that important?

Well, here's my answer: yes. It's very important to make participating in the life of the Church a priority on Sunday mornings. It's very important to go to church.

And there are all sorts of reasons that I could give you for that, not the least of which is 'going to church to honour your Saviour.' We were once dead in transgressions and sins, doing our own thing, ignoring God, destined for wrath; but in His great mercy, God, because of His great love for us sent His Son to save us and freely give us REAL life. The LEAST we can do is give Him some time on a Sunday morning.

But I want to focus on two reasons in particular why it's important to come to church. 1<sup>st</sup> – you need us (the church). And 2<sup>nd</sup> – we need you.

And this is what I mean by that.

You need us – because others believers help you to grow in faith.

And we need you – because you have gifts to help other believers grow.

So that's what we're looking at this morning – it's very important to go to church because the Church helps you to grow in faith and you have gifts to help the Church.

Now first off, I know you probably all realize this, but let me just clarify: when we're talking about the church here, we're talking about the people. (Here's the church, here's the steeple...) It's the people that make up the church, not the building. One hundred and eleven times, the word for church appears in the Bible and every one of them refers to the gathering of people who have been saved by grace through faith. It never refers to the building. So when I say 'it's important to 'go to church', what I'm really saying is 'it's important to participate in the body of believers that gathers weekly in the building that we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century call 'the church.'"

So, it's important to participate weekly in the body of believers that we call church because other believers help you to grow in faith.

Back in the day, when I was acting like a lone-wolf Christian, I was missing out on something very important – the input of other believers in my life. I was convinced that I could make it on my own, but that's not how God intended us to be as believers. He has saved us, not to be lone wolves, but to be a part of a family of believers who will refine and correct and affirm and strengthen each other's faith.

There's a very famous proverb that captures how this works – [Proverb 27:17](#) - As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (Pro 27:17 NIV). When we gather as the church, we serve as iron to sharpen one another and that won't happen when we are alone.

Have you ever tried to sharpen a knife without a whetstone or a sharpening rod? You can't, can you? You need something for it to rub up against to refine it and sharpen it and that's what God created the church to do. To sharpen one another as iron sharpens iron.

That's why the author of the [book of Hebrews](#) calls us to make coming to church a priority. He writes – chapter 10, verse 25 - 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day (Judgement day) approaching (Heb 10:24-25 NIV).

He knows that some people, even in the first generation of believers, were willing to let going to church slide down their list of priorities, but he also knows that going to church is crucial if believers want to grow. And so he says – 'Gather together. Encourage one another. Verse 24 actually says "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

It's important for us to go to church because that's how we grow as believers.

[Sam Alberry](#) writes "One of the reasons church is vital is that the practice of meeting together is one of the key ways in which God encourages us in our faith. We have been designed to need other Christians to help us keep going in the faith and to whom we can be an encouragement to do likewise." (*Why bother with church?*, 33).

So let's think about what this looks like on a Sunday morning. Right off the bat, there's me – I'm the big whetstone at the front of the church teaching you and stretching you and exposing you to the Word of God. That's the most obvious way that spiritual growth happens.

But it's by no means the only way. The author of the book of Hebrews doesn't say – 'let your pastor do all the work' – he says 'you, encourage one another. You spur each other on to love and good deeds.' You're doing that when you rally together to make meals for people in need. When you recognize an opportunity to serve, you say 'hey, let's gather our resources and use them for God's glory!' Every time you do that, you are giving each other opportunity to serve and to be generous and to give your time and talents and resources. You are helping each other to grow.

And every Sunday morning, I see you encouraging one another. Bert sharing a smile and lifting your spirit. Ray praying with people. Nelly hugging people and giving an encouraging word. I see you taking on each other's burdens. I see you sharing your experiences and your insights and your favourite Scriptures with people who are hurting. Those are not insignificant actions – that's iron sharpening iron.

And it only happens when we gather together for church. That's one reason why it's so important.

So I think that we can say – 'you need us.' But we can also say 'we need you.'

Church going is important because you have gifts to help other believers grow.

See God intends for Langford Community Church to accomplish certain things and He has given you unique gifts to do unique things that you alone can do for the benefit of the community. If you're not here, then we miss out on the gifts that you have to give.

Let me show you where I'm getting that from – 1 Corinthians 12 – starting at verse 4, Paul writes:

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

6 There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

8 To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,

10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines (1Co 12:4-11 NIV).

Let me pick out four points.

First, God gives ALL of His children spiritual gifts. If you have trusted in God and followed Him, then He has given you a spiritual gift - a unique combination of interest and ability and spiritual empowering to do some – thing, and there is no one who has no gift. That's verse 7 – now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given; verse 11, He gives them to each one. If you are a follower of Jesus, then that means that you have a unique spiritual gift that allows you to access the Spirit's power to do some thing for the benefit of the Kingdom.

Second. God intentionally gives all His children spiritual gifts. That's verse 11 – "All these are the work of one and the same Spirit and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." You have a spiritual gift that is uniquely chosen and uniquely suited to you. This is not an accident. God has intentionally chosen to give you some spiritual gift that you alone can use. And in His wisdom, He has gathered you in alongside other brothers and sisters whose uniquely given gifts will complement yours. That's verse 18 - 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

So God gives all of His children spiritual gifts and He gives them intentionally; third, He gives them for the common good. That's verse 7. 'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.' My spiritual gift is not FOR ME; it's for the church. It's for you and you and you and you. I think I have a teaching gift; if I did not exercise that, but instead, kept all of my learning to myself, what benefit would that be for you? There'd be none, right? But as I use my gift, you benefit and that's how spiritual gifts are meant to work.

So let's think about the implications before I get to the last point.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have a spiritual gift. You have some unique ability that God has given you that the person sitting next to you probably does not have.

And that gift has been GIVEN to you. Intentionally. God, in His sovereign wisdom, looked at you and said 'this person is uniquely suited for this gift' and He's given it to you.

And that means, that you have something special and unique that only you can offer to the church. If you use it, we all benefit. If you don't, then we miss out. See why we need you?

So here's my fourth point – it's actually more of a question – what's your spiritual gift? Verses 8-10 give you a list – prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, healing; over in Romans 12, Paul fills it out a bit more:

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach;

8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Rom 12:6-8 NIV).

Peter adds - 10 Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1Pe 4:10-11 NIV).

Can you see yourself there? Remember, God has intentionally given you an ability to serve for the common good – you've got something. And to help with that, at the end of my message, just before we sing, I'm going to have you fill out a spiritual gifts inventory. It's not comprehensive and admittedly, this is not an exact science, but it will give you some idea of how God has uniquely gifted you to benefit the church and I would really love it if you would share it with me.

If you follow through the four points that I just said to their logical conclusion, it means that if we're going to really thrive as a church and succeed in the mission that God has uniquely given us out here in the country, then we need to use these gifts for each's benefit and the benefit of the world. So I'd love if you'd share your results with me.

It's important to come to church because you have unique gifts that will benefit your fellow believers.

So, is it important to come to church? Well, I'd say yes – because you need us and we need you. You need us to grow in faith, iron sharpening iron, as we encourage one another to love and good deeds. And we need you, because you are uniquely gifted by God to serve your brothers and sisters. So yes, make church a priority.

Sam Alberry writes – 'Your church needs you. You may not have the gifts you wish you had, or that seem the most important or visible, but you are as vital to the health of the church as anyone else.'

There will be a contribution you can make that is unique to you... There is no one there who is not necessary, or who doesn't need the rest of their church. That includes you – which is really quite exciting. God has chosen to include and to use you. You can make a real, lasting, eternally significant difference by being a part of your church. Your church is vital to you and you are vital to your church” (Alberry, 36-37).

And I want to close with an illustration that you may already know, because I think once in youth group, somebody mentioned it to me, but I'll close with it because it's really quite fitting.

St John of the Cross once described the Christian life as burning coals set in a fire. Together, they burn hot and bright and warm the world around them. Take one of those coals out of the fire though, and set it by itself and it will grow colder, not hotter. Christian life is the same way. Alone, we risk growing cold, but together we burn bright for all the world to see.

You need us, we need you. Let's be the church together.

#### BENEDICTION

2 Cor. 13:11 - Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.