



Series Title: Stewardship – Making our Whole Lives Count for Jesus!

Weekly Title: Stewardship.....Church

Date: Sunday November 6

Bible Passage: Acts 2:42-47

Purpose of Preach: To inspire and encourage people to commit to the adventure!

Introduction:

Have you asked why you bother with a local church? If we are honest many of us can find church really hard work at times. It can feel irrelevant. Some of us have been frustrated by church. Some of us have been bored by church. Some of us have been hurt by church. So why on earth should we bother being committed to a local church? Well ultimately because Jesus does. In Matthew Jesus says “I will build my church”. It is His church, it is His project, it is His dream. Building His church is His mission and He is passionate for His church. Jesus’ heart burns with a love and commitment and a passion to build His church on this planet. As we read the New Testament we see that the early Christians made it a priority to be part of a local church. So in Acts 2:42 they were “devoted” and committed to being church together. The word used here is “proskartereo”. It means “to continue to do something with intense effort, despite of difficulty to keep on and persist in”. They refused to allow anything to take them out. We see in v.46 that they gathered together every day. Some scholars argue that the gospel exploded in Jerusalem to such an extent that in a short time they had grown to 100,000 in a city with a population of 200,000. They were passionate, committed, sold out and made it a priority to be part of a local church. I want to look at these verses in Acts 2 and consider five glorious reasons for why we should bother with church.

#1: WORSHIP

You need a church family to help you centre your life around God through worship.

a) We see in Acts 2 they centred their lives around God through worship. They loved listening to Bible teaching and working through what it meant for their lives. They celebrated God’s grace through taking communion together. They clung to God in prayer. In everything they did we see in v.47 they were praising God. Here was a local church family centring their lives around God through worship.

b) How does worship in your local church help keep God at the centre of your life? i) It means God is included in your timetable. Being part of a local church is a gift from God to enable us to put into the rhythm of our lives at least a weekly connecting point with Him. It means that we are declaring God is so important to me that I am going to commit to being part of a local church. ii) As we gather we declare His magnificence and worth.

God’s purpose is that for His church to worship Him. Being part of a local church means that you are encouraged to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus! *iii) As we gather together God loves to move in power. God has chosen that as His people gather to worship Him that something wonderful can happen. We see in Acts as this local church gathered together to worship they were filled with awe as the Holy Spirit broke out in the miraculous – there was*

a move of God in this gathered group of people. Being part of a local church is God's gift to you to help you keep worship at the centre of your lives.

#2: FELLOWSHIP

You need a church family to help you connect with other believers through fellowship.

a) *God wants you to connect first with Him and then He wants you to connect with other members of His family and learn to love them.* Fellowship is learning to love other people in God's family. We see in Acts that this local church was devoted to fellowship. God's heart for you is to learn how to love other people. (John 13:34-35) God is saying "I did not put you on earth to live an isolated and insulated life." God's heart is for us to learn how to love people with His love. We see this so wonderfully in Acts 2. They did life together; they learnt how to love and encourage one another.

b) *This is why in Alive we encourage people to attend a life group each week.* For you to get the most out of being part of a local church you need to be in a smaller group than what gathers on a Sunday morning. A group of twelve to fifteen people where friendships can form, where you can learn to love people and support people and encourage people.

#3: DISCIPLESHIP

You need a local church family to help you cultivate spiritual maturity through discipleship.

a) *God wants you to grow in your relationship with Him.* He does not want you to stay a spiritual baby, He wants you to grow up. Being part of a local church is key part of how God wants to mature our relationship with Him.

b) *God uses His church to disciple us in our walk with Him.* We get the encouragement to keep going when we feel like giving up. We get the wisdom and support of people who have been walking with God for a lot longer time than us. We get the accountability of having friends around us who love us too much to ignore things in our lives that are not how God wants them to be. We get spiritually fed through regularly engaging with the Bible through anointed and well prepared Bible teaching and discussion in life groups. God uses other people in our lives to deepen our walk with Him.

#4: SERVING

You need a church family in which you can use your gifts to support and encourage other people.

a) *In this local church in Acts 2 we see a church that served one another.* We see they not only invested their time, but also they invested their money to make sure that people who were in need were looked after. Being part of a local church was not about what they could get out of it but was also about how they could serve one another. God's heart for you is to use the gifts He has given you to serve others.

b) *In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul says every person has a role to play, a gift to be used and not one person is more important than another.* There is this glorious picture of the church being like a body where all the parts work together for movement and momentum. This is what God's heart is for the local church. To have a community of people who serve one another and all are playing an active role.

#5: MISSION

You need a church family to help you to see this town, region and world reached with the gospel. *We have a glorious picture of this in Acts 2:47.* As this group of people...Met regularly to worship God. Loved one another and enjoyed fellowship Grew in personal relationships with God through discipleship. Served one another and used their gifts....They saw a move of God and many thousands more were saved.

Application - Could it be that you have lost sight of the privilege, purpose and priority of being part of a local church? (Give practical responses for how people can get involved in your location)

