

Hi everyone, this is your church

I have a son who asks a lot of questions. Deep questions. Questions about life. I do a lot of theology study and I sometimes think instead of doing that, I just need to sit down with Joseph and think about his questions. He's very good at it, and I'm sure those of you who are parents will understand this familiar trait....the questions often come late in the evening....it's very cunning! In fact, we were with family over Christmas and the cousins were laughing that they'd figured out that the best way to avoid going to bed and stay up later is by asking questions about God!

So here's one of Joseph's questions that we are hoping to consider and look at this morning. He said, "Mum, why can't you be a Christian on your own? Why do people need to go to church?" What a great question. I wonder how many of us don't really have an answer, we just have it programmed into us that we wake up in a Sunday morning, get dressed, have our breakfast and go on automatic pilot and somehow find ourselves at Headingley Methodist without thinking why? What would you say to that question? Why can't you follow Jesus on your own? Why do people need church? Let's explore that:

I started thinking well, maybe **God** needs the church? What do you think? Does God need the church?

No of course not. He's all powerful, he's all amazing, he's all things that those of you in a secondary school have probably learnt - you know those Latin words about God- they're not in the bible but I guess they sound impressive...you know all those 'omni' words? The words that describe God...omni.....?

Omnipotence (he is all powerful, he has unlimited power, his power does not run out, nothing is too hard for him)

Omniscience (he knows everything, he knows mysteries, thoughts, feelings, laws, causes, secrets, all things visible and invisible)

Omnipresent (always here, close to everything, with us when we pray)

So God can get **everything**, that means everything, done on his own- look how he created the earth, he made the stars, the sun, the moon, the plants, the animals, he made me and you and everything. Everything was made through him and everything belongs to him.

Psalms 24 says 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it'

So we've learnt that God is all powerful and so he doesn't need us to do his work for him. But for some reason (and I actually don't know why) he has chosen to use us. I think if I was God, and if I wanted a job doing, I would have chosen a better method, maybe using a combination of superheroes or something but no, he chose us- we are it! God has chosen the local church, **that's me and you**, to be the primary method of spreading his message of love to the world.

So you are chosen, God has chosen you personally. We used to play this game when the children were younger. We would be chatting away on a walk, then in the pram or, on a good day, in a nice coffee shop over a cake and a hot chocolate somewhere (!) and I'd ask them questions like 'what would you choose, tractor or digger? Digger usually always won that one. What would you choose double decker bus or skid steer? Train or car transporter?

The point is that **God**, being incredible, all powerful and omni-everything could choose any other way of telling people about how wonderful Jesus is, and what life is like following him, but he didn't choose the super heroes, **he chose ordinary, normal, people like us**. That makes us pretty special.

So, where are we up to in answering our questions of Why can't you follow Jesus on your own? and Why do we need the church? We've learnt that God is amazing - so it's not that HE needs the church to do what he wants to achieve.....so that brings me to the conclusion that God knows that it's for **our** benefit that the church exists- fancy that! I think he knows that we actually need each other. So let's look at why?

1. Worship.

We **can** worship on our own, and if you've ever driven in a car next to or near Sally Lingham, she is testament to that, she's singing away, worshipping to her heart's content! But there is nothing like coming **together** to worship God.

I had an operation last year so I had to be away from church for a bit whilst I recovered. To be honest, for the first two Sunday's I thought, cor this is nice, I get to have a lie in on a Sunday but then it was horrible and I really didn't like it - I longed to be with my church family worshipping together. Sometimes, you don't know what you treasure until it's taken away from you.

God created us to worship him and when we get together to worship God, it satisfies our soul because it's how we were made, it's like we are living to the manufacturer's instructions.

Worship is not just about singing, you can worship together doing anything- playing football, as you cook, as you turn wood - lets watch this video clip of what worship means to these people: [video](#)

We are not meant to **just** worship on our own. I often think a good model for what we should be doing on earth is to pause and think about what our eternal home is going to be like- when we go to be with Jesus. I think about what would happen there, when we die and go to be with him. Do I, do you, think we will be worshipping on our own when we go to be with Jesus? No, we'll be with countless others and gazillions of angels all praising God. The bible says that this is what it will be like when we go to be with Jesus:

'Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!'

Revelation 19:6

The music might be a bit duller here on earth, the colour a little less bright but we are **designed** to all get together and praise Jesus. We can't do that as individuals.

2. Learn from each other.

We are not meant to do life on our own. We can have wonderful friends, we can have wonderful neighbours, we can have wonderful family but there is also something wonderful about followers of Jesus coming together to **learn** from each other, encourage each other and look at the bible together and figure out what it means. Of course, like worship, we can read the bible on our own- but I think it works best when we study the bible on our own, ask God what it means, maybe even read some other books or listen to podcasts to help us understand the words a bit more, **and then** we come back together to chat about it and learn from each other- and so it repeats- we study on our own, back together, study on our own, back together - a bit like this yoyo, you study on your own, then you come back to your small group or on Sunday and you learn and discuss. It's great because there's always someone else who you can learn from.

So my point is, not even those who won at Countdown or Steve in their clever-ness can figure out **on their own** the complexities, the poetry, the stories, the parables, the weird stuff that is just pretty difficult to understand in the bible. We need to chew on it together, to discuss and learn from each other, figure out and ask God what he thinks and listen to what He might be saying to us as we read it.

3. We pray for each other.

Lastly, one thing that we really need church for is to pray for each other - and I mean actually seeing somebody and praying with them, in their company. We can obviously pray for each other anytime and any place but there is something super special when we literally pray with someone when they are next to us. The book of Matthew says that when 2 or 3 are gathered together in his name, he is there. We hear from God for each other and we bless what God is doing in their life. Hearing from God is so precious.

Hearing from God for each other is so precious. We are all learning at this. Adults and children learn on Sundays or in small groups how to hear God's voice- how do we do that? Well, we ask God to come by his Holy Spirit, we wait, God might share with us a picture that we see in our minds and then we share it with the person it's about. God gives us words of encouragement for others that changes lives.

I believe that we are created to worship an amazing, wonderful, personal, omni-everything God who chooses us to share the good news of Jesus with the world. And in answer to Joseph's question- yes, we can worship, study the bible and pray on our own but I believe, if we do that, we are only following Jesus in black and white. As a church we are not perfect, but the church adds so much colour into our walk with Jesus.

Kate Newman

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