

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, do I have to go to church?

1 Peter 2:4-5; 9-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, Hebrews 10:19-25

1. What does the question reveal about how the questioner views church? Why might people ask this question?
2. Why did Mark suggest that the short answer is 'no'?

YOU'RE A BRICK Read 1 Peter 2:4-5 and 9-10

3. What is the correlation between the physical temple of the Old Covenant the spiritual temple of the new?
4. How is the spiritual temple being constructed?
5. Consider the following descriptions of God's people and reflect on what each description means: chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession. (Bonus: read Ex 19:5-6)
6. What does it mean that we are to *declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light*?

YOU'RE A GIFTED AND NECESSARY BRICK Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

7. In many ways, the 'body' analogy is another way of communicating similar truths to the 'temple' analogy. Yet what unique and important truths are taught here?
8. Someone at church says to you, "well I don't do anything much, no one would miss me if I wasn't here". How would you encourage them?
9. If you rob us of your presence (and therefore unique ministry), we lose- significantly! Yet if you rob yourself of us, you **also** lose! What is the danger of a Christian trying to go it alone?

WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU! Read Hebrews 10:19-22

10. Mark said that this 'drawing near' is not referring specifically to what we do in an hour in church on Sundays, but in all of life. But he went on to say, that our gathering is a particular and focused way of 'drawing near'. Why then will this be important for someone who has been neglecting 'drawing near' all week?
11. Why are some *today*, also in the habit of giving up meeting together - or at least only coming every other Sunday, or only if there's no better offer?
12. Drawing near to God is an awesome privilege. Encouraging one another is a significant responsibility. How do you answer someone who says "I worship on the beach" or similar?
13. Read the conclusion to the message again. What is wrong with the question, "Do I have to go to church?"
14. Has anything been new to you from this message? Or has anything struck you in a fresh way?

May the Lord give us such a grasp of his vision for the church, that we revel in all he has in mind for us and never ask that question again!

Date: 11th August
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian
Series: Dear God
Title: Do I have to go to church?
Passage: 1 Peter 2:4-5; 9-10, 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, Hebrews 10:19-25
Outline:

1. **You're a brick**
 2. **...a gifted and necessary brick**
 3. **...and we can't do this without you!**
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INTRODUCTION

- “Dear God, do I have to go to **church**...?”
- If you're **anything** like me, that is a question you've asked at some stage or another.
- In fact, I asked it at around **6.30am** this **morning**!!
- **Seriously** though... **who** asks that question? /
- People for whom church has become a **burden**... or a **chore** or a **bore**... or a source of **frustration** and a place of **disappointment**...
- Maybe people **bruised** and **broken**, by the whole church **experience**... /
- ...I met someone at one of the three large funerals we have had recently who said they hadn't been back to church since the seriousness and extent of the **sexual abuse** in the church had become widely **known**...
- She expressed an understandable **sentiment** - “we were **good young people** all those years... maintaining our **morals** because the church told us we should and all the time / **they** were abusing **children**...” she was **angry**... // **I get that**...! //
- Who **else** asks “do I have to go to church?”
- Sometimes it's people who have **no idea** about the **role** or **place** of **church**...
- Their famous line is ‘**I worship God at the beach**’ or ‘**I feel closer to God in my garden**’
- Or **they** think **WE** think we score **points** with God for going to church - a friend of ours once said that they didn't need to go to church any more because they'd racked up enough points for a **lifetime** going every day during **school**! //
- And some people who **claim** to be Christian will also ask **this** question - indeed - they **may** be Christians - but they have (sadly) missed the **point** about church - they've seen it as **ritual** and **obligation** - not something that is **joy-filled** and **life-giving**... they see it as something to be **endured**, not **enjoyed**!
- “Dear God, do I have to go to church...?”
- The **answer**? //
- The answer is ‘**no**’... // you **don't** have to go church... we do not live under **legal obligation**... we are not about **ticking boxes**... ////
- But by the time I've **finished** this morning, I hope you'll **have seen that while we don't HAVE** to go **church**... you'll have also **wonderfully** seen that **YOU - YOU** as an individual - are **such a unique** and **special** and **valued PART** of **church** as God has **designed** it - that you'll have grasped such a **big picture of church**, that you will actually **never** ask this question **again**...!
- Well that's a tall **order** I've set myself... **where** do we **begin**?
- We **begin** with me explaining that:...

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| { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You're a brick 2. A gifted and necessary brick 3. We can't do this without you! | } |
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1. YOU'RE A BRICK

- (Because we're looking at a number of passages this morning and I don't want you to lose focus by trying to find them - I'm putting them on the screen - but they are all from the passages which were just read for us...)
- Look with me first of all at 1 Peter 2:4-5: *As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- **Because** of the ministry of Jesus Christ... and under the **new covenant** – we do **not** now have a **physical temple**...
- ...but we **DO** have a **spiritual** temple
- And the role of the **spiritual** temple is the same as the **physical** temple – to be a place where people meet God – and in the words of 1 Peter 2:9 – to be a place from which the **praises** of **God** emanate!
- If **YOU** trust **Jesus**... you are a **living stone** // a **brick** in God's spiritual **temple**...
- That is, **YOU individually**, are part of **God's temple** in the **world**, whereby **together** with every **other living stone**, you **represent God** and **declare God's praises** to a **needy world**.
- This is spelled out a little more in **v9** – have a look with me - *you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*
- He's speaking **to** – and speaking **about** – **all Christians together... globally**...
- ...we **Christians** – **ALL Christians together** – are a **royal priesthood** – that is – we **mediate God** to the **world**... /
- ...and we are his **chosen people**... we saw that in Ephesians last year – **chosen** by God since **before time** to be **holy** and **blameless** – do you recall? –
- ... as a **people** we've been **set apart** – we're **different** – we're **feel** different – we **live** differently – we have a whole **different** understanding of the world and our part **in** the world...
- ...we are God's **special possession** – yes of course – **all** the world is his – but we are **his** in a **special** way because we have a very **special** and **unique role** in the world...
- **And that role?** – *to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light...*
- By 'declaring praises' he doesn't mean to sing **hymns** and songs – though it **includes** that! –
- ...no / we **declare** the **praises** of God – we **announce** how **wonderful** he is – we **advertise** the **riches** of his **grace** and the **beauty** of his **invitation** to come to **him** / **simply** yet **profoundly** as we live the **radically different** lives to which we're **called**... ///
- You're a **brick**... //
- You're **part** of God's **plan** to **save** the **world**...
- Part of the **spiritual structure** he's set up, whereby **more** and **more people** may be **attracted** to the **light** – and **leave** the darkness of a life lived **without Jesus**... just as **WE** have been transferred from **darkness** to **light**.. ///
- "Do I **have** to go to church?" //
- Well – here's the reality – you're **part** of the very **structure** – the **fabric** – the **makeup** of the **church**... if you have turned from **self** to **Jesus**... you **ARE** the **church**...!! // '**Going**' to church – by gathering with the other living stones – you are simply **living out** who you **are!** ///
- But – there's **more** - not only are you a **brick**... but you are:

2. A GIFTED AND NECESSARY BRICK

- Now we turn to 1 Corinthians 12:12 - *Just as a **body**, though **one**, has many **parts**, but all its many parts form one **body**, so it is with **Christ**.*
- We are the **body** of **Christ**... **another** expression which helps us **realise** who we are...
- So you're a **brick** - a living **stone** in the spiritual temple... but here, using **another analogy** - you are **one** of the **many** parts of the **body** of **Christ**...
- What does the **body** of **Christ** do? It does what Jesus Christ **himself** did - **reveals God** to the **world**... it's the **same** role as the **temple**...!!
- And you saying - "well I don't **want** to go to **church**" - or "I don't want to be **part** of the **church**..." is the same as your **foot** saying - look - I'll be fine without the rest of your **body** - and **you'll** be **fine** without **me**...// an obvious **nonsense**...
- I love the **ridiculous** nature of the way Paul is **putting** this to **us**...!
- Saying you're not **needed** in the **church** - not needed in **THIS** church - is like your ear saying 'look, I do not **belong** here... I'm going it **alone**'...
- ...or your **eye** saying to your **hand** - thanks but I don't **need** you... //
- There is **one body**... there are **many parts**...
- And **each** part Paul says (in the paragraph just before the one we read...) is given unique gifts from the Holy Spirit for the common **good**... /
- So if you're **part** of our **church** - God has given **you** to **us**...
- ...you're **unique**... and you play a **unique part** in the **body** of **Christ** here - which **no one else** can **play**... / just as your thumb cannot suddenly fill in for your **eye** if it wants to take a **break**...
- Only **you** can do what you **do** here... God has given **you** to **us**... I don't care **who** you are - or how long you've **been** here - you're a **precious** and **important** part of this **body**... //
- Now you may say to me 'well - Mark - that's very **nice** of you - but **really** - I don't do a **thing**'.
- And if that's what you're thinking, you've **missed** the **point** // because this is not about the **jobs** you **do**.... This is not about fulfilling **tasks**...
- ...no; this is about **you** being **you**...!
- No one else can be **YOU here**... no one else can **care** in the way you **care**, **love** in the way you **love**, **pray** in the way you **pray**... //
- In the **body** - every single **part** plays a **vital** and unique **role**... and we are all **magnificently different**... the part an **eye** plays is very different to the part a **foot** plays - or a **toe** plays for that matter - but both are **vital** for a **normal life**...
- And the part **YOU** play in this church is **vital**... !
- ...just by **you**, being **you**...!
- God has gifted **you**, **uniquely** for **THIS body**...
- Look with me at **v18**, *But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be....* That includes, **YOU**!
- "Do I have to go to church?" you may feel like asking...
- ...but here is the thing... if you rob us of **YOU**... we **lose**...!! // we're not **complete**... something is seriously **wrong**... and our life together will be **hampered** by your absence... like we've undergone an **amputation**...
- if you're **not** here and **not** playing your part in church life... not only do you rob us of **YOU**... you **ROB YOURSELF** of **US**!! - how are you going to **survive** on your **own**....?... without the rest of the **body**...? //
- Try chopping your **leg** off and see how it does on its **own**... or taking your **eye** out and seeing if **it** survives on **its own**! //

- “Do I have to go to church?”
- Do you see how that question misunderstands the whole **point**... misses the whole glorious **vision** of what the church is **for**?? //
- So you are a **brick**... // you are a **gifted** and **much needed brick** in the **temple** or **member** of the **body**...
- ...and...

3. WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!

- Look with me at Hebrews 10:19-22 *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*
- Since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus has opened the way for us to draw near to God, we **can** and **should** draw **near** to **God**! /
- We can run to him without **fear** now, because our **sin** has been dealt with.
- We have been **cleansed** from a guilty **conscience** and having been joined to Christ in **baptism**, our whole **selves** have been **washed**.
- This ‘**drawing near**’ is not referring **specifically** to what we do in an hour in church on Sundays, but in **all** of **life**.
- **Every moment** of every day is to be lived ‘**drawing near**’, because God has made that **wonderfully possible**!!
- And yet there **is** a sense, as we gather for **corporate worship**, that we draw near to God in a **particular** and **focused** way. /
- What an awesome **privilege** – and one we neglect to our own **undoing**! **Why would we miss**!?
- You may have been neglecting ‘drawing near’ **all week**... and *that* in fact may make you feel less inclined to **come** on Sunday... but it is **exactly** what you need... take advantage of ‘**drawing near**’ with the **rest** of us, who **also** need to draw near in a **specific** and **focused way**... //
- Which brings us to vv24-25 – these verses are **very** significant for our understanding of mutual responsibility as believers.
- have a look with me again: *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
- We need to consider how to spur one another on in **love** and good **deeds** and to **encourage** one another in our **relationship** with the **Lord Jesus**.
- When you get together with other Christians, whether that be on **Sundays** for **church** or simply for a **coffee** or **lunch**; do you ask yourself, “**how can I spur my brothers and sisters on** toward **love** and **good deeds**”?
- “What can I do, to inspire **others** to be more loving and more **generous** in doing good?”
- “How can I encourage them in their **walk** with the **Lord**?”
- And it is **because** we have this **awesome** and **weighty** mutual **responsibility**, that we **must NOT give up meeting together**. It is **too important**!
- Show me a Christian who has stopped gathering with other Christians or for whom the Sunday gathering has become ‘subject to a better offer’, and I’ll show you someone for whom God is no longer their **passion** or **focus**. They are no **longer** taking up their cross daily and serving **Jesus**!
- And not only are they neglecting their **responsibility** to their **brothers** and **sisters**, they are also seriously missing being **spurred on** and **encouraged** by **others**.
- The result is **not good**! //

- So – *because* we have the **freedom** to do so – let's **draw near** to God.
- And because we have the **responsibility** to do, let's **not** give up meeting together, but seek to **spur one another on** and **encourage one another** – especially as the **day of Jesus' return** gets **closer and closer!**



- **Do I have to go church?**
- If you've caught God's vision for his work in the world, you won't **ask** that question.
- If you've grasped that you're a living **stone** in God's spiritual **temple** and that you're part of his **priesthood** – part of his **chosen people** to declare his **praises** to a **needy** and **watching world**... you won't **ask** that question...
- If you've understood that you're a member of the **body** of **Christ** – **uniquely created** and **gifted** to be a **member** of the **body** that only **you** can **be**... and that the body is **hampered** or **disabled** without you, you **won't ask** that **question**
- And if you've grasped that we draw **near** to **God** – and as a church we are to **spur one another on in love and good works** and **encourage** one another to **keep going** and to **keep going** and to **keep going**... and therefore we should **never** give up **meeting together** as some do... you **won't ask** that **question**...
- You'll ask more **importantly** // how can I live out my **role** as that **living stone**...? how can I best play my **part** as a **member** of the **body**...? how can I **spur others on** and **encourage** them... ??
- ...**SO THAT**... the glorious **message** of the Lord Jesus – the **praises** of **God** - can be **declared** more effectively, to the **world!**