

WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

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The Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) was an amazing event, by any standards!

- ALL the believers in one place
- Sound like a mighty windstorm
- Flames of fire on each of them
- EVERYONE filled with the Holy Spirit
- They spoke in tongues
- Onlookers were amazed and intrigued
- Peter preached Christ, crucified and resurrected
- People were convicted of their need
- 3,000 responded in faith and were baptized

That may seem like a flash in the pan—a one-off occasion—but it was really just the beginning of something that has continued to grow over time and in the face of sometimes great opposition.

It is not an exaggeration to say that no other social or religious organization has demonstrated such strength and growth in the history of humankind as the Church that is led by Jesus Christ.

Over the last 2,000 years, what began with 12 leaders and less than 1,000 people now numbers 31% of the world's population (about 2.3 billion people)! Over 600,000 of those are Pentecostal believers today.

The Church, however, is not just a loose collection of preaching points and crusade evangelism. What the 12 discovered during their four years with Jesus was more than a body of doctrine or a technique of ministry. They learned to love one another, to do life together as people of faith. They became a family that was not limited to a single household or a single tribe or a single culture or a single language. Nevertheless, in every part of the world, Christians gather together to share their life and faith.

The Global Church is made up of millions of local congregations—gatherings of believers and seekers—in caves, under trees, in huts, in houses, in rented buildings, in cathedrals, in stadiums.

90% of those congregations number less than 200 people. 80% of them number less than 100. Yet some represent tens of thousands of believers.

Regardless of their culture or their size, they all share some things in common—things which began to be shared from the very beginning. We can read about these things in Acts 2:42.

Acts 2:42 They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. (The Message)

This verse has appropriately been recognized as God’s design for the local church—not the outward appearance or form, but the inner character and content: teaching, fellowship, worship, and prayers.

And wherever these are practiced regularly there are significant results.

Acts 2:43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

The key in all of this is “regular practice.” *Occasional* practice does not yield the same quality of results.

But we live in a culture of “instant gratification” and “virtual connections.” Routine is regarded as boring. Interdependence is viewed as weakness. Yet we wonder why we feel lost in the midst of crowds.

Let me put it to you in the form of a rhetorical question: *Why join a local church?*

I have my top ten solid reasons that I have discovered (and I’m quite sure you could add others) that beg for a commitment to membership in a local church. I wonder if you have considered these?

10. Consistent teaching

John 8:32 You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

I am not referring to a single voice, but to a shared perspective, that is the result of hearing one another.

It also provides an appropriate application of truth, fitted to our local community and culture.

And, it serves to maintain sound doctrine, because it is openly shared and reviewed.

9. Prayer support

Acts 4:31 And when they prayed...

Powerful things happened when the first believers joined together to pray! Prison doors were opened, and buildings trembled!

There is safety and thoroughness in shared prayers (those that are offered in concert and meetings for prayer).

And, of course, as Jesus said, there is power in our agreed requests.

8. Faithful counsel

Romans 15:14 You are able to instruct one another.

In a local church family, counsel arises from love before intellect. Guidance is offered with mutual understanding and shared responsibility.

7. Mutual accountability

Romans 12:5 We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

Together we will taste the results of our behavior, because our lives are lived in secret or in a hidden corner. As a result, we will hold one another to our word.

Doing the Christian life together promotes giving abundant encouragement to each other. We may “weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.”

6. Depth of fellowship

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

Fellowship runs deep when we tackle chores together. And like any household, the local household of faith has many daily and weekly chores to be done.

Fellowship runs deeper when we face challenges together. Challenges are inevitable, and

when you hang together, you won't face them alone. Caring and praying and standing beside each other lends much strength for the journey.

Fellowship runs deepest when we survive difficulties together. Every local church (like any family) experiences cycles of life—highs and lows, successes and failures, blessings and difficulties. No one asks for hardness, but when it is shared, it develops strong bonds of love and trust.

5. Height of worship

Matthew 22:37 You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

Worship is what we were made to do. But, do you aspire to be a soloist or a choir member? The best worship is probably offered as a combination of both. Are you willing to be both?

Community calls for our best, because others inspire us, and others boost us.

I am confident that the highest praise is shared praise.

4. Witness of Unity

John 13:35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

This is our most compelling witness, and it can be developed in no other way than doing life together as a local assembly.

It was the central theme of Jesus' prayer for us:

John 17:23 May they experience such complete unity that the world will know that You sent Me and that You love them as much as You love Me.

3. Complementary gifts

1 Corinthians 12:7 A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

²⁵ *This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other.*

God's gifts were not given to promote competition, but to provide complementation. Others can make up what is lacking or weaker in you (if you are willing to receive it).

Only together can we become a "whole body" of Christ.

2. Service opportunities

Galatians 5:13 Use your freedom to serve one another in love.

Where could you find more frequent opportunities to serve others than in the local church? Not just the classic roles (deacon, teacher, usher), but helping in so many ways, inside and outside the church property.

Service opportunities increase your LQ (love quotient). Love increases as you give it away.

Service opportunities increase your closeness to Jesus. He said so Himself:

Matthew 25:40 I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!

1. Partnership in mission

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

The Great Commission is a task that we cannot fulfill alone or on our own. In fact, not even a local congregation can do that! It takes the whole body of Christ.

It takes all of us, working together—sometimes going, sometimes sending, and always praying and giving.

So, why join a local church? Here are my top ten reasons:

- Consistent Teaching
- Prayer support
- Faithful counsel
- Mutual accountability
- Depth of fellowship
- Height of worship

- Witness of unity
- Complementary gifts
- Service opportunities
- Partnership in mission

Have you ever wondered, What if the Hokey Pokey *really is* what it's all about?

The same could be asked about the Church. What if the church—not just the ideal or the concept, but the local expression of the Body of Christ— What if the church *really is* what it's all about?

I hope you are gaining the full benefit of this local church. That happens when you put your full confidence in Jesus Christ and join the mission of the local church.

You'll discover meaningful truth, find personal support, grow deep in faith, soar high in worship, use your gifts, increase your love quotient, and accomplish godly mission.