

Chapter 1:

Decisions, Decisions

Did you know that apparently on an average day we will make something like 35,000 decisions? 226 of those are on food alone!¹ Now I reckon that is going to multiply rather a lot as you start out at uni. *Which clubs and societies shall I join? What will I have for dinner? What shall I do in Freshers' Week? Who shall I choose to hang out with? When should I do my washing?* Well I want to talk to you about the most important decision that I think you can make as a student ... *will I go to church?*

Now let's not beat about the bush here, you might have been going along to church with your family since you were age dot, but are you going to carry on, or was that just because your family did? Or maybe you joined a church later on in life but now there are so many other things you could be doing on a Sunday, so many other people to see and clubs to join ... is church worth the time?

YES! Emphatically YES! Church is absolutely worth the time and the effort. In fact I believe that it is the most important and significant part of your life as a student – am I being over the top? NO! Your degree is important, your friends and socialising are also important, even some leisure time is important – but your spiritual life is a matter of life and death. Surely it's worth putting some time and effort into that?

So let's think about this big question: Will I go to church?

Why do I think that church is so important? It's not just me saying it, take a look at what God says about the church:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Eph. 3:10).

God is saying, *my church is where it's at, my church is where people will see me, my church is where the whole world will see that I'm in charge, and you need to be there to see it.* If the church is this important to God it needs to be equally important to us.

The Bible holds the church in such high regard that wise people like John Calvin (important dead guy from 1500s, who brought about massive change in the church for the better) have concluded that if you're saying you're a

Christian, but not going to church, then you're (probably) not a Christian.² Eek! That's an uncomfortable statement isn't it. Surely, we're saved by grace aren't we, not works like attending church! But the Bible never says that being part of a church is a 'work'.

In the same chapter that Paul says, 'For it is by grace you have been saved ... not by works, so that no one can boast' (Eph. 2:8-9). He also goes on to paint this beautiful picture of what the church body looks like, united, built up together, joining to become a holy temple – he assumes that these Christians are already actively in the church – not that it's an added 'work' for them.

This is God's plan for all Christians, to be a part of a church that is being built by God. Just as you and I, if you're a Christian, are saved by Jesus and brought into the church, so we grow as Christians, becoming more like Jesus, by being part of a church.

So let me circle back to the opening question of this chapter. Will I go to church? For some of you this is a no-brainer, that's great. But for any of you reading this book who know you may be tempted once you're away from home to make other things the priority, or to be put off by the effort of getting to church when no one else you live with is getting up early on a Sunday, can I urge you to consider this chapter very carefully. There is nothing more important than church, there is no place that you need to be more than church, the church is where it's at, the church is where we see God and the church is where you grow. Don't think you can go it alone, put simply – you can't, and God doesn't want you to.

¹ Dr. Joel Hoomans, '35,000 Decisions: The Great Choices of Strategic Leaders', Roberts Wesleyan College, published 20 March 2015. <https://go.roberts.edu/leadingedge/the-great-choices-of-strategic-leaders>, accessed 15 February 2023.

² Calvin, John, Institutes of Religion, 4.1.10.