

THE LIVING CHURCH

(Idea for this series and title taken from John Stott's book of the same name)

Scriptures: Matt 22:37; 28:19-20; Mark 10:21; John 20:21; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; 20:2; Eph. 5:25; Phil. 2:7-8; Rev. 3:1.

1. If you were moving to a new town or city and were looking to join an 'alive' church, what would be the main characteristics you'd be looking for?
2. What was the Lord's assessment of the church at Sardis? Read Rev. 3:1. What is the difference between reputation and character?
3. What would you say to the person who is fascinated by Jesus, yet hugely critical of the Church?
4. How would you describe the early church? Do we sometimes wear rose-tinted specs when we think of first century Christianity? (Can you think of good and not-so-good examples in the pages of the NT?)
5. Read Acts 2:42-47. If this snapshot of the Jerusalem church is a good example to us, what are the lessons we might learn from them?
6. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching..." (v42). Why is it so important to be a learning church? In which ways can we also devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching today?
7. In which way did the Jerusalem church care for each other? (see also Acts 4:32-37). Is this realistic for Christians today?
8. David Watson : "Until the kingdom of God can be demonstrated in our relationships of love with one another, we have nothing to say with any credibility to an unbelieving and broken world." Thoughts?
9. Where did these Christians worship? (v46) Why is a two-winged church so important? What are the benefits of both Cell and Celebration?
10. When this church met 'everyone was filled with awe' (v43) and they had 'glad and sincere hearts, praising God...' (v46-47). What balance should we also seek in our worship services, and why?
11. Read v47. What important truths does this verse tell us about evangelism?