

|| MAKING FIRST THINGS FIRST

WEEK 7 – HIS BODY (John 20:19)

Our focus today is set on Jesus highlighting the importance of the “**first day**” principle.

|| *“Someone once said that our great grandparents called it the Holy Sabbath. Our grandparents called it the Lord’s Day. Our parents called it Sunday. And we call it the weekend.”*

The **first day principle** shows the importance of **placing God first** in our week. Without it we are prone to being weak for the oncoming seven days! Giving God an offering of our time is symbolic of our preference over the rest of the hours and days we possess. The first day is a day we set aside to **honour God** as the Lord of our lives. It’s a day of remembering our **covenant** with Him, a time of **renewal**, of **rededication**. The first day allows us to prioritise the coming together of the **Body of Christ**. Never underestimate the power of being together as the corporate body of the Church.

From the time of the early church until today, **Sunday** has become the symbolic day that the assembling together of the church has occurred. The **New Testament** saw the first day of the week, Sunday, as a **special and sacred** time specially set aside to remind themselves of the salvation they had received through Christ.

They did that by sharing **communion**; rejoicing together about the goodness and faithfulness of their God; **singing; praying; fellowshiping** together; receiving teaching and equipping from the **Word**; sowing **financially** into the work; **partnering** together in the expansion of the Good News through their **testimony** and **witness**.

We do not worship Sunday as a day in itself. The bible tells us that we are ever-present with the Lord and that God can be worshipped at **any time**, on **any day**. But there is something dynamic when the Body of Christ comes together **corporately**, and for the past 2000 years that day has been Sunday. The bible says:

|| *“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”” (John 20:19 NIV)*

|| *“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.” (Acts 20:7 NIV)*

Coming to church has been too focused on things we want from going there. Our modern mindset has us acting like a **consumer of products** when we consider attending. Is the worship going be good, our preference of preacher, the kid’s ministry curriculum, the air conditioned climate control of the building, the comfort of the pews. The church needs to ensure that they are giving their best in those areas but those things shouldn’t be the key points we are using to **lure people** to a better product than the product down the road.

Unfortunately most people want to know what they can get out of church rather than what they can give whilst being there. The **Body of Christ** is about **servicing** and **sacrifice**, **commitment** and **fellowship**, through the **shared faith** in the head of the Church, **Jesus Christ**.

The **Psalmist**, thousands of years before the creation of the New Testament church, describes in vivid detail and passion the importance and privilege he felt when considering the house of the Lord.

|| *“One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.” (Psalm 27:4-6 NIV)*

One thing I **desire** of the Lord – to run into His house – in times of trouble – in times of joy – bringing sacrifices of praise – allowing Him to reposition my thinking – giving Him permission to recalibrate my emotions and wellbeing. Being planted in the House of the Lord brings a refreshing and nourishing environment to my soul allowing me to flourish. The **Psalmist** goes on to say:

|| *“Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.” (Psalm 92:13 NKJV)*

In our **consumeristic** world, filled with optional choices, Jesus **challenges us** about our desires. Developing a “one thing I desire” mindset gives my life the ability to be “**planted**” in the House of the Lord, His Body. The result is a flourishing life.

Jesus’ **FIRST THING** challenge to us today is that we recognise the importance of placing time with Him as a priority in our week. He is challenging us to fix a **First Day principle** in our lives.

Life for all of us is all about **graduating** from one season to another, one life event to another, and one experience to another. Eventually it includes graduating from this life to the next. **How we graduate is often up to us.**

Through my own experiences I have learnt that **graduation doesn’t come simply through attendance**. Attendance obviously places me within the classroom but it **doesn’t** guarantee my success or fruitfulness. As people who want to grow in Christ, we sometimes have this notion that what God is really looking for is that we show up and have **perfect attendance at church**. As wonderful as that is, He’s actually calling us to graduate into **something deeper**.

Attendance is something that we must **begin with**, but we’re meant to graduate from simple attendance. He is actually looking for us to be **planted**. Jesus didn’t come to earth to

convince us to attend church. He came to create the ability for us to become part of his family, to be grafted into his vine.

The writer of the **Book of Acts**, Luke the physician, gives us a glimpse of what the early church community looked like (ref: Acts 2:41-47). From a group of “**religious attenders**” they’d graduated into a **Kingdom community**. The **main key** to that change was the **Holy Spirit**. An outpouring that first occurs on the **Day of Pentecost** that catapults them into this dynamic community Jesus had often told them about. But another key that they discovered was the power of **church-life**.

If Jesus was encouraging the implementation of a **First Day** of the week priority for his followers, what were the **kingdom essentials** that he was wanting us to discover?

1. || Learning

The **very first thing** mentioned by Luke in his account in the Book of Acts is that “they continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” In other words, **they were a learning church**.

They didn’t view the apostles’ teaching as **merely human speculation**. Rather, they accepted it as God’s inspired Word. Jesus has appointed them as his authoritative spokesmen, and promised that the Holy Spirit would enable them to understand and communicate the meaning of his life and death. Therefore, what the apostles taught was binding and authoritative.

Wouldn’t it be great to have their teaching? We do--through the **New Testament**. It is the record of the apostles’ teaching. Coming together as the Body of Christ allows us to encourage, teach, inspire, instruct, correct, equip, and release us into our mission fields.

I’m wanting to **graduate to deeper levels** of understanding of the ways and thoughts of the Lord. That’s going to require **more than simple attendance** but a **posture of a student** who is keen to learn more. If I am neglecting the First Day priority then my ability to learn is impeded.

2. || Fellowship

Christian fellowship is not having a coffee after the church service ends. Some time ago I dedicated an entire sermon to talk about the term “**koinonia**”, the Greek word simply meaning “**to have in common**.” Christians share the **most important** thing in common--the very life of Christ. And God has designed the Christian life in a way that compels us to share his life with one another.

So the early church practiced **Christian community as a way of life**. In Acts chapter 2 we see that they “were together” (vs 44), and they “took their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart” (vs 46). Yes, they met together frequently for Bible study (we’d perhaps call them **small groups** or **Connect groups**) but these meetings were evidently only the tip of the iceberg of their fellowship. They visited one another, they ate together

frequently, **and they talked about the Lord and prayed together**. They generally prized being able to be with one another. And then they came together as a corporate group on the First Day of the week to celebrate all that God had done through the other days!

3. || Prayer

There is something about praying with other Christians that is really important, but it's not always easy to explain. **It binds us together closer**, as we engage in the intimate act of communicating to God. It enables us to pray more effectively as we pool our knowledge of God's will. **It stimulates us to pray more than when we're alone**.

Standing here with you all in a service as we pray always refocuses my spirit because of the unifying action of joining together with you in prayer.

4. || Generosity

I am constantly overwhelmed by the generosity of people within this church when they discover a need. The survival, effectiveness and ability of Peninsula Christian Care is an example that you can be proud of as it is totally funded by you. Hundreds of people in our local community are cared for because of our generosity.

Generosity is a culture. On my own I may choose to be generous but I am taught the principle of giving through the culture in which I immerse myself. The church has taught me to be generous in every aspect of my life. Watching my parents give out of the little we had shaped my understanding of being a generous person.

Generosity is an **acknowledgement that God is the ultimate owner** of our possessions. The early church believed that he would care for them, and they understood they had a responsibility to **manage God's resources** in ways that facilitated his goals. They saw their money primarily as a means to bless others rather than as something to hoard and spend on themselves. So they gave **generously and sacrificially** to help others' spiritual lives and alleviate real human need (see Acts 4:32-37).

5. || Witness

Jesus commissioned us to **be his witnesses** (ref: Acts 2:8). What we witness is what we have experienced. Our **testimony** is the most powerful message we can deliver because it shows the activation of the Good News in our lives (ref: Revelation 12:11).

Coming together as a corporate body of believer's reemphasizes the encounters we have had, and are having, with Jesus.

|| Close

Jesus challenges us to fix a First Day priority into our lives. The **first day principle** shows the importance of **placing God first** in our week.