



## Session 11

# Playing Your Part

The Christian life cannot be successfully lived in isolation from other Believers. Following Christ is a 'team event'. We need each other in order to reach our maximum individual and corporate potential.

The context in which we work together for maximum impact is the local Church. You need to be expressing your unique God-filled gifts and personality in a specific church family.

Some Christians shy away from this truth, claiming it is enough to be part of the wider Body of Christ that includes every Christian on the planet. But that is intangible and unworkable. The Bible makes it plain that we thrive when 'planted in God's house' (*Psalm 92:13*) - which is the church - and that we need to be living, working and growing in a spiritual family unit – which is the church. We covered this in *Session 7*.

Of the first Christians it was said:

*'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.'* (*Acts 2:42*)

Devotion is a strong and specific thing. It has a focus, and for those believers it was the church. How about you? Where are you devoting yourself? Where are you expressing your empowered life in practical involvement?

### Playing Your Part is a Choice

People choose how great a part they will play in the life of the church family; they *'devoted themselves'* (*Acts 2:42*).

The church is like a number of ever-widening circles: some get involved right at the centre, others nearer the fringe of things. Some move in and out from time to time because of other commitments in life.

The church leaders will respect the level at which you want to get involved. Our heart is that everyone gets fully involved in our life and mission, but we must be considerate and allow everyone to play their part at a level which suits them best. 'Putting your self in' is

actually a heart attitude and not measured by the amount you do. Some are unable to do much practically, but their heart is 100% for all the church is doing. Others work non-stop but can have a hidden agenda or wrong motive and are not fully committed to the church in their heart.

When we talk about ‘playing your part’ we therefore mean ***being a functioning part of a thriving local church*** community, like the one here at *Abundant Life Church*. It is good to know you belong!

***Play your part by choosing to:***

### **1. Be Together**

When Jesus appointed his disciples, he chose them first of all to ‘*be with him*’ (*Mark 3:14-15*). There were other reasons, too - to ‘*send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons*’ - but those activities arose out of time spent in fellowship with him. Similarly, whatever other activities Christians may engage in together, the basic ingredient of fellowship remains ‘*being together*’.

Practically, this means attending meetings, supporting church events and activities, putting yourself in wherever you can. And not because you have to, but because you want to!

***Play your part by choosing to:***

### **2. Be Friendly**

It is easy to come to a meeting, sit through it and return home without having had any real communication with anyone. Small groups like *LIFE Groups* or meetings based around an aspect of mission or ministry avert this danger to some extent but we should also seek each other’s company outside of meeting times (See *Hebrews 10:24-25*).

Reaching out in friendship to others will help to break down the barriers caused by differing personality, social background, upbringing, colour, education and so on. Here is an area where Christians can show society a better the way (see *James 2:1-4*).

***Play your part by choosing to:***

### **3. Be Loyal**

By definition, the church is distinct from the world. Those who are in the church are light; those in the world are darkness (*Ephesians 5:8*). So, our loyalty must be primarily to our fellow-believers and especially to those with whom we have a relationship in the local church. No gossip concerning a fellow Christian should be entertained.

See: *Philippians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 12:24-27, James 4:11*

If you do fall out with someone in the church, *Matthew 5:23-24* and *18:15-17* explain how personal grievances and offences between Christians should be handled. Simply stated, Jesus taught us to work in straight lines with each other and to always be willing to admit it if we are wrong and forgive those who do the same to us.

Trust no other way. Once division, rivalry or gossip begin, the whole church is liable to collapse, becoming a laughing-stock to the world and a source of grief to Jesus.

***Play your part by choosing to:***

#### **4. Be a Servant**

Every Christian has some means of contributing to the life of the church, some ability which can be for him or her a means of obeying Paul's exhortation to '*serve one another in love*' (*Galatians 5:13*). We explored this in *Session 10*.

Fundamentally, we all serve one another doing whatever job needs doing, just because we love Jesus and the wonderful people he has joined us with in the church family (*1 Corinthians 14:26, 31*).

*'Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms' (1 Peter 4:10).*

***Play your part by choosing to:***

#### **5. Be a Giver**

The Christian message is all about giving. If God had not given his only son to die for us, we would still be lost in sin (*John 3:16*). God loved us so much, he gave. We now give back to God and his people from the same motivation – we love God and his people!

We are in the church not primarily to receive but to give. We shall be at the receiving end of blessing too, of course, but only in proportion to our service. If you want a special blessing, begin to serve – '*It is more blessed to give than to receive*' (*Acts 20:35*).

You can give many things: money, time, skills, energy, prayers, advice, practical help – and so on. No one is disqualified. The more I give, the more I feel I belong. The more I give, the more I am a functioning partner.

Though our whole attitude is now one of being a 'giver', the area of giving **finance** is one we need to be particularly clear about. Jesus said, '*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*' (*Matthew 6:21*). Your money goes to the things you love the most!

Even a casual reading of the New Testament reveals that money is very important in the kingdom of God. Scripture has a great deal to say about it. It is not money itself but the *'love of money'* which is the root of all evil (*1 Timothy 6:10*).

The Bible teaches us some important general principles of giving. See: *2 Corinthians 9:7*, *1 Corinthians 16:2* which establish that God intends our giving to be: (a) In proportion to our income (b) Systematic, and (c) With a willing cheerfulness.

These principles are expressed through the giving of *Tithes* and *Offerings* which we do not have space to explore in detail here. But we would recommend the *Abundant Life Skills* study guide called ***Money Matters*** by Pastor Stephen Matthew, which takes you simply through these important principles, and the messages by Pastor Paul on financial themes available from the resources shop.

***Finally, play your part by choosing to:***

## **6. Keep Growing**

As you choose to 'play your part' you will grow in your relationship with God and the church. Choosing to be: Together, Friendly, Loyal, a Servant, and a Giver, is therefore a choice to Grow!

Right at the start of your Christian life, make a commitment to God that you will never stop growing. In that way you will serve his purpose and have the most fulfilling life possible:

*'In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to be a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit' (Ephesians 2:20-21).*