

“Why go to church”.

One of the questions I keep pondering is: "What real difference will the Christian faith make to the people that I meet?" That is, why would people make the effort to join a church, attend worship, make new friends, and offer financial support to a Christian community?

How we deal with life, how we cope with the difficult moments, how we celebrate the good times, what priorities we set for ourselves, and what we consider to be 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour, depends on what we believe about life and the people who share our life.

I think that life in the church and with God makes sense because human beings are created for a relationship with God. Our lives are always restless until they return to God. Life with God doesn't make everything perfect and without struggle, but it does provide a relationship, a story, and a community that enables us to live well.

The Church holds to a story that tells us what values and relationships and things are really crucial to a complete and full human life. It reminds us of the value of care, forgiveness, loyalty, and care of those who are marginalized in our society. It reminds us that life is fragile and fleeting, and is to be lived hopefully and with risk because it is held in the hands of God. It reminds us that we are more valuable than we believe, because we are made in the image of God, and we are made for community and not isolation.

We believe there is a brokenness and struggle in life, a sense that we simply do not achieve what we hope for either because of life's circumstances or our own distorted behaviour. We believe the Holy Spirit makes change possible in our lives so that we can become more and more like the sort of people God calls us to be.

We believe that people need a community of friends who hold the same story and encourage a Christian life, and that it is not possible to live the Christian life in isolation from others.

No, Christians aren't perfect. But it is no accident that many, many people who are involved in community welfare and caring for others are Christians, people whose life story and friendships support and encourage such care. Being a Christian does change your life.

Rev Dr Chris Budden