

What's the point of gathering as church? 1. Up

discussion guide based on **Matthew 18.15-20** (Linked to sermon from 19/1/20)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/sermons

This was the first part of a series looking at the point of gathering as church, especially in our digital age, with reference to our Up-In-Out discipleship triangle.

Intro: What sort of 'digital discipleship' materials have you accessed – eg online teaching or worship?

Summary of sermon:

- Digital technology / smartphones are changing the church and discipleship as they are changing many other parts of life
- Some of this is positive: eg being able to access Bible teaching / worship at a convenient time, place and format
- Some of this is negative: eg it's harder to discern dodgy teaching; it's easy to be selective and get an imbalanced spiritual diet; you can get 'spiritually constipated' through too much teaching without putting it into practice; ordinary local churches can seem disappointing; we can stop going to churches in person; we can miss out on God's particular message for a particular people
- Matthew's gospel talks about personal discipleship – eg praying, giving and fasting privately
- It also talks about corporate discipleship – eg praying 'Our Father', sharing communion together, celebrating baptism
- Matthew 18.19 shows there is a power when we gather in Jesus' name
- Jesus also promises his presence (unseen but very real) when we gather in his name
- Online resources can be a great supplement to gathered worship, but they can't replace it

To think through / discuss with others:

1. When you think to yourself "Is it worth going to church this morning / cell group this evening?" – what helps you decide to go / not go?
2. How have digital discipleship resources helped you grow in love for God?
3. Dan noted various ways that digital discipleship resources could also hinder our relationship with God. Do you agree / disagree with his comments? Why? What other dangers would you add, from your experience?
4. Matthew's gospel mentions baptism and communion as two parts of discipleship that can't be done digitally. What is it about the physicality of baptism and communion that are important to you?
5. The Lord's Prayer talks about 'Our Father' 'our daily bread' 'our sins' 'deliver us' etc. Why do you think it's important to pray collectively as well as individually?
6. Matthew 18.19 talks about the power of gathering in Jesus' name and the promise of his presence. How have you sensed Jesus' power and presence in corporate gatherings (eg church services, cell group)?
7. Dan finished by outlining various ways that gathering together helps grow our love for God (eg seeing someone else worshipping God, despite going through great difficulties, inspires us to keep pursuing God) What other examples would you add?
8. Consider your own use of digital discipleship opportunities: is it too little? Too much? Does it skew your discipleship diet unhelpfully in one direction (eg all worship, no teaching; or all teaching, no practice)? What changes (if any) do you think you ought to make?