



Set Up The Tent! The “why” behind our regathering.

Date: Sunday 29th August

Speaker: Andrew & Rosie McNeil

Key Verses: Hebrews 10:25 Psalm 22:3

Talk Summary:

When I was growing up (Rosie) we used to go camping. We couldn't do anything until we unpacked the car and set up the tent. Without the tent, there was no holiday - and it wasn't until we'd all helped to set the tent up that the adventure could begin. God has an adventure for us and first we need to set up tent. We acknowledged 2 realities. This time has been incredibly tough and the second reality is that God is at work. It's inconceivable that God isn't redeeming this moment.

Why it's so important to regather? (set up tent) 9 reasons.

- 1. It's time to welcome our new brothers and sisters** - Many people have met Jesus, found and joined our Church or moved to Birmingham during the pandemic. Jesus calls every one of us to be part of His welcome team and to welcome the growing family.
- 2. Gathered church is an open space for the good news of Jesus** - It's relatively easy to connect with church if you have superfast broadband, or unlimited data - but many people don't have those things - there is a real digital divide and we don't want to disadvantage anyone. Front doors open to all is an open door for the Gospel, for everyone, regardless of circumstances.
- 3. Gathered church is a foretaste of heaven.** It's easy to stay in our own little friendship bubbles. In heaven I'm going to be mixing with people from every tribe and tongue and nation (Revelation 7;9) and church is supposed to be a foretaste of heaven. Jesus is present as we learn to love one another and honour one another from different backgrounds, life experiences and cultures.
- 4. We encounter God as we worship together.** The Bible is absolutely clear that wherever we gather together in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of us. So many have commented how rich and life giving and precious is to be back together in God's presence because *“The Lord inhabits the praises of his people”* Psalm 22:3
- 5. The gifts of the Holy Spirit build up and encourage.** It has been AMAZING to hear the stories of God visiting people by His Spirit during online church - healings and special moments of grace but there is so much more that He wants to do with us. Gifts extend God's kingdom and build up his Church and they are so much easier expressed in close proximity.
- 6. We are “the village” for our children and young people.** They say that it takes a village to raise a child and that's been really hard in lockdown. As we regather we can work together again to encourage and strengthen the faith of families, kids and youth. We can all do this by setting an example, praying regularly, expressing interest and serving on teams.

7. A place of Community. We were made for connection and relationships are hard to build over Zoom! We need to be with one another in different seasons of life. Grief and loss and joys and celebrations are to be shared together. We bear one another's burdens as we both laugh and cry together.

8. Jesus served his friends – So do we. Following Jesus is about laying down our lives for one another. He came to serve, not to be served and he calls us to follow his example. For our own spiritual health, we need to move beyond this season of isolation and imposed spiritual consumerism and move towards serving our brothers and sisters and gathering with them. Serving is a big way that so many of us feel alive in our faith.

9. Gathered Church - it's Jesus' idea, not ours. The Bible is clear that we are to consistently gather together as God's people **Hebrews 10:25**. In obedience to God's word, we're regathering. God has a plan for each of our lives but that plan needs to be worked out in community. That is formed as we consistently commit to being present to God and to one another.

Church is not about a diet of my personal preferences (like Just Eat or Deliveroo). It's not about ordering the meal I choose at a time I want. Church is a family meal where everyone contributes. We're all involved in the set up and preparation. It becomes an occasion. Together we taste and see God is good. We feast on His presence, His word and His work amongst us. It's a shared moment in the presence of God.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- What other reasons might there be for gathering together as Church?
- What have you missed most?
- How do you think the Lord may be at work in this time and what is his invitation to you as his friend and follower? (If you are unsure, what might help you hear him speak?)
- How might God be speaking when you consider the prophetic word Carol Wimber spoke back in summer of 2019 (before any clue of the pandemic)
Carol, said "something's coming, going to affect the whole world... going to be really big and also terrible and everyone needs to TAKE THEIR PLACE"

Witness - *How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?*

In this season of regathering, we are welcoming new people at our services. Some are following Jesus and others are spiritually unsure or seeking. What would be the most helpful thing we could do to welcome new people? Here are 3-4 suggestions you may want to discuss:

1. Helping people fill in connect forms (via the QR code or bvc.so/connect)
2. Swapping numbers and having a text chat in the following week.
3. Inviting someone back or out for lunch / or for a drinks.