

The Importance of Church Membership

Text: Galatians 4:4–7

Introduction

To underscore the importance of membership within the local church, we shall first remind ourselves what the church really is and then consider what membership in it means.

Message

1. What is the church?

- a. It is not an organization made up of programs, ritual systems, and slick methods dedicated to attracting money and members to itself.

It is a living organism, a body with a personality that is alive and breathing, feeling and acting, suffering and sorrowing, and in constant need of healing and restoration, both individually and corporately, local and worldwide (Ephesians 5:30; 1 Corinthians 12:20,25–27).

- b. It is not buildings and offices, departments and titles, hierarchies and positions dedicated to earthly display and self-glorification for the purpose of being accepted by the world.

It is people—living and loving, forgiving and forgiven, praising and helping together—for the glory of God! (Ephesians 4:13–16).

- c. It is not another worldly institution devoted to applying the novacaine of humanistic principles and solutions to man’s spiritual and social ills.

It is a witnessing agent, a pricking conscience, and a sword of opposition. Its compassionate purpose is to make men and women caught up in Satan’s web become aware of their sin and need for a Savior and aware of Christ’s loving mercy toward them (Colossians 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2,3).

2. What is true membership in such a church?

- a. It is not just attendance at the services of worship and Bible study. It is not singing in the choir or even faithful attendance at prayer meetings.

It is genuine participation in the worship, study, and prayer of the body of Christ in this local assembly. Its purpose is to glorify God, to praise and exalt Him.

- b. It is not just donating money and time for voting in pastoral and other elections of the church, or teaching Sunday school, or serving as elder or deacon or even pastor.

It is genuine participation in the serving ministry of the body of Christ in this local assembly. Its purpose is to edify the Body through financial and personal service whether world, community, or body centered.

- c. It is not just praying for missions and giving money for lost souls far away.

It is genuine participation in the evangelistic mission of the body of Christ in this local assembly. Its purpose is to witness Christ to the world in our own house, community, and wider world.

3. Membership in the church is, in a word, participation in the family of God (*koinonia*—family fellowship).

- a. It is participation in the family fellowship of the Body (Colossians 3:15–17).

The purpose of the Body is (1) to live together in God’s peace as one; (2) to conform to His Word; (3) to abide in His grace; (4) to fulfill His will in word and deed; (5) to give thanks.

- b. It is participation in the family worship of the congregation (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 14:26, NASB).¹

- c. It is participation in the family witness to the world (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).

Conclusion

1. The Church is the living, witnessing body of Christ, “a people together for His glory.”
2. True membership in the church is taking my place in the family of God: its worship, its fellowship, and its witness.
3. True membership, therefore, goes beyond just attending, donating, serving. It is joining the family of God as an able son or daughter and fully sharing in all that pertains to that family.

Application

Appropriate responses might include one or more of the following:

1. Communion.
2. Chorus: “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God.”
3. Hymn: “The Church’s One Foundation.”
4. Acceptance of new members.

Ronald E. Cottle, Columbus, Georgia

Endnote

1. Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org).