

Local Church Membership

Our Individual Responsibility in the Local Church

Introduction:

1. The words church, assembly, and congregation, are used in two senses in the New Testament.
 - A. Universal sense: (Matt 16:18 - “*I will build my church*”).
 - B. Specific sense - the local church or congregations: “The church at Corinth (1 Cor 1:2), The church of the Thessalonians (1 Thes 1:1), “The seven churches of Asia” (Rev 1:4). The church at Jerusalem (Acts 2:46-47), The church at Antioch (Acts 11:26) These are but a few of the 16 such churches named in the New Testament.
 - 1) Basically, all New Testament references fall into one of these two categories when referring to the church. Therefore when we determine which category a particular scripture means, the church universal or the church local, we’ll gain a better understanding of that particular passage.
 - C. Local churches were well organized functioning units.
 - 1) God did not organize the universal church into a functioning unit. He left the work up to the individual local churches in any given area.
 - 2) This morning we want to ask the question: “What is my personal responsibility to the local church?”

Should I Be a Member of a Local Church?

1. Some contend that, if they have been baptized, they are already a member of the Lord's church and that no other action is necessary. IS THAT TRUE?

- * **Universally "Yes" (Added to the church)**
- * **Locally "No" (Must join the church)**

A. Saul, after his conversion, went to Jerusalem. What did he do?

Acts 9:26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

1) The Greek word for "join" means "to glue or cement together, to unite, to join firmly together." (Vines).

* **One doesn't join the church universal - they are added to it (Acts 2:47).**

* **So what does one join? (LOCAL CHURCH)**

2) Paul desired to be part of this group. After initial reluctance they accepted him as part of the congregation. Notice verse 28:

Acts 9:28 So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.

2. Peter was a member of a local church (ELDER).

1 Pet 5:1 The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

3. Why is it necessary for a Christian to join himself to other Christians?

A. Early Christians did things together that were mutually beneficial for each of them.

Acts 2:41-42 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1) Thus the importance of worshiping with a sound church, not an apostate group.

c) If there is no sound church to be found, then there is no choice but to start one.

B. The Hebrew writer exhorted the Christians not to forsake the assembly so they would be able to admonish and be admonished.

Hebrews 10:23-25

1) Can anyone doubt or deny that our assembling together with other Christians is for our good? The scriptures teach that we have an obligation to one another in this regard.

a) Our attitude toward life itself should manifest itself in our work and worship of God.

2) When we fail to assemble with a local work then we are selfish, not considering our brethren. How can we provoke one another to love and good works if we are at the lake, golf course, or at home instead of with the saints worshiping God?

C. Another aspect of local church membership is discipline.

- 1) God put discipline in government and in the home. All of man needs discipline. Discipline is for our own good. God made it that way!**

Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loves He chastens...

- a) Is it any wonder then that God put a system of discipline within the local church (1 Cor 5).**
- b) The church was instructed to withdraw from an erring brother - why?**

1 Cor 5:5... that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

- 1. The church was to withdraw, not for retribution, not for punishment, or other reasons, simply for the purpose of causing this soul to realize his error so that he might be saved! FOR HIS OWN GOOD!**
- 2. We should see the blessedness of church discipline. After all, I wouldn't want to be part of a group that cared so little about my soul that they would not try to help me walk "the narrow way."**
 - 1) I want to go to heaven. I need help getting there. The local congregation of God's people can help me.**
- 2) We are added to the Lord's church (universal) through baptism, but we "join" the local church.**
 - a) Why would one deny himself access to something which God designed for his own good? Do we doubt God's wisdom? Or is it just that we are seeking to avoid God's discipline because we have a heart problem?**

- 3) If we do not join ourselves with a local congregation, how then do we carry out Jesus' instructions of Matthew 18:17?**

Matt 18:17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

D. We are responsible for promoting Unity in the local congregation.

- 1) Why be part of the body and not promote unity?**

1 Cor 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

- 2) It is a responsibility of each member to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. When we are here when we can be, it promotes unity among the brethren!**

4. Clearly, God's intent is that every Christian join himself to a local church.

- A. He provided the local church as the vehicle for the feeding and oversight of the sheep. Consider just this evidence and answer the question: "Should I be an active member of a local church?"**

Blessings of Local Church Membership:

1. Fellowship in Worship.

A. We draw strength from one another when we meet together to worship our heavenly Father!

1) It is gained as we “sing and make melody with our hearts to the Lord” as we are “speaking to one another” (Eph 5:19). We are able to “teach and admonish one another” (Col 3:16).

2) It is gained when we partake of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week, we “proclaim the Lord’s death” (1 Cor 11:26).

B. Working alone, worshiping alone, standing alone, and serving alone are discouraging.

Rom 11:2-4 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

2. Fellowship in Work.

A. “Fellowship” is joint participation. Fellowship in work means all are working. If you are not working, then you are not in this fellowship.

1) It is good, it is a blessing, to be able to share the work. There are some I can’t reach with the gospel, but perhaps you can.

a) For this I am thankful that I have others to work with me.

3. Blessings of Brotherly Love.

- A. In times of physical problems, I thank God for brethren who care. In times of spiritual crisis, some care enough to be there.**
- B. Some love enough to reprove, rebuke, exhort (2 Tim 4:1-2) when it is needed. The proverb writer wrote:**

Prov 27:5 Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.

- C. It even helps when one says "We missed you!" Knowing they truly mean it!**
- D. The following verses show our responsibilities in encouraging and loving one another.**

Col 2:2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ,

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

- 1) In a world of turmoil it is good to come to God's family where there is love and happiness and everyone WANTS to be here and be part of it.**

Conclusion:

- 1. We need to be thankful to God for all of his blessings to us.
- 2. We need to be thankful for the blessings associated with being a child of God, a member of the body of Christ, which is the church of Christ.
- 3. We need to also be thankful for the blessings associated with being a member of a local congregation.
 - A. All of us have responsibilities in the local congregation.
 - 1) We should be loyal to Christ and the responsibilities He has given to each of us.
 - 2) To be able to function as the unit God designed is only possible when we each do our part.
 - 3) Everyone of us is responsible
1 Cor 12:20-27

Eph 4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- 4. Are you doing your part or have you failed not only god, but His family as well?

Invitation:

Place		Date	