

Many Members In One Body

Introduction

Romans 12:4-5 For as **we have many members in one body**, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

- 1. God's people do not live and serve Him independently and in isolation from one another. Instead, wherever we read about Christians in the New Testament, we read about them working together.**

Acts 2:42 And **they continued steadfastly** in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

- A. Fully organized groups of Christians worked and worshiped together under the leadership of elders and deacons.**

Acts 14:23 So when **they had appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, **with the bishops and deacons:**

- B. This working relationship of Christians in a given place can be described as the "church local," as distinct from the "church universal," which is the totality of all Christians everywhere.**

2. The Lord's church is referred as the "body" of Christ - A body is made up of many individual "members."

Ephesians 1:22-23 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to **the church, which is His body**, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

3. As members of the Lord's body in a specific locale, the members of a local congregation are "members of one another."

Romans 12:5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and **individually members of one another**.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "LET EACH ONE OF YOU SPEAK TRUTH WITH HIS NEIGHBOR," **for we are members of one another**.

4. We have responsibilities to one another, as well as to the Lord.

5. A closer look at the church (one body, many members) will help us understand why individual Christians have responsibilities to the local congregation.

The Church, the Body of Christ

1. There are three important passages dealing with the church, the body of Christ:

Romans 12:3-8

1 Corinthians 12:4-31

Ephesians 4:1-16

2. Membership together in one body means that every member has a personal interest in and responsibility for the body:

A. Its work - **Ephesians 4:16.**

B. Its healthy growth - **Ephesians 4:16.**

C. Its unity - **Ephesians 4:3.**

D. Its purity - **Ephesians 5:27.**

E. Its reputation - **Philippians 2:15.**

3. Involvement in and responsibility to the body is not a matter of private choice:

1 Corinthians 12:18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

4. There is no such thing as a “useless organ” in Christ's body!

A. Not only are there no useless members, there are no unimportant members either.

1 Corinthians 12:14-17, 21-23.

Other Descriptions of the Church

1. In the New Testament, the Christian is:
 - A. A branch in the vine.
John 15:1-8; Colossians 1:10
 - B. A laborer in the vineyard.
Matthew 20:1-16; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 15:58.
 - C. A citizen in the kingdom.
Matthew 16:18, 19; John 3:5
 - D. A child in the family.
John 1:12; 1 Timothy 3:15.
 - E. A soldier in the army.
Ephesians 6:10-17; 2 Timothy 2:3
 - F. A vessel in the house.
2 Timothy 2:20-21.
2. Participation in the benefits of the vine, vineyard, kingdom, etc. of God involves acceptance of the responsibilities of membership.

The Problem of Being Passive

1. We have seen that the church is a sphere of activity.
2. However, most congregations have a few members who are content to be passive rather than active.

“The world is full of willing people: some willing to work, the rest willing to let them” (Robert Frost).

- A. There is the problem of those who do not wish to identify themselves as working members of any one congregation.

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) They attempt to drift aimlessly about as “members at large,” or “floating members.”
 - 2) This problem is especially acute in areas where several congregations exist within driving distance of one another.
- B. There is the problem of those who do claim membership in a specific congregation, but choose to be passive and inactive.
 - 1) These just belong — they do not accept any responsibilities of membership in the local church.
 - 2) They, in effect, are just along for the ride.
3. In reality, Biblically, there is no such thing as a “passive member.”
 - A. By definition, a “member” is a functional part of the “body.”
 4. Even after becoming a member of the body, one needs to remember that faith without works is dead - (James 2:14-26).

Conclusion

1. **Any worthwhile, beneficial relationship involves responsibility.**
2. **What about our responsibilities in view of the many benefits and blessings which come from being a part of a local church?**
 - A. **Encouragement to do right.**
 - B. **Friendship and companionship.**
 - C. **Knowledge gained from others.**
 - D. **Benevolent help when we are in physical need.**
 - E. **Prayers offered for us.**
 - F. **Comfort in sorrow, help in troubled times, assistance in difficulty.**
3. **Failure to properly understand that individuals in a local congregation are “members of one another” — with duties to one another — has been the cause of much needless disunity, unhappiness, boredom, and inactivity in churches.**

“The happy people are those who are producing something; the bored people are those who are consuming much and producing nothing” (W. R. Inge).

4. **Let each Christian in this congregation make a renewed commitment to accept not only the benefits, but also the responsibilities of membership in Christ's body.**

1 Corinthians 12:25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that **the members should have the same care for one another.**

1 Corinthians 15:58

