

I Am a Church Member - Session 1

Our idea of the concept of *membership* is based largely on our involvement in secular organizations. Bringing this mindset into our understanding of church membership creates a culture that asks, "What can I get?" not "What can I give?" Creating unrealistic expectations of church develops an attitude of entitlement which leads to dissatisfaction when things don't go our way. To become a church that is more like the community of believers that God intended, we have to have a shift in our understanding of what it means to be a *church* member.

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 - New King James Version

¹² For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For in fact the body is not one member but many.

¹⁵ If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *would* the body *be*?

²⁰ But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. ²³ And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, ²⁴ but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, ²⁵ that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸ And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. ²⁹ *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

I Will Be a FUNCTIONING Church Member

- ***Membership Means We Are All Necessary Parts of the Whole*** (1 Corinthians 12:27)
 - ◆ African Proverb: "I am because we are, we are because I am."
 - ◆ 1 Corinthians 12:14, 19 (The Message)

- ***Membership Means We Are Different but We Still Work Together*** (1 Corinthians 12:26)
 - ◆ Diversity in Unity: "The fact that there is so much diversity in our church is our strength. Everyone has a function. Everyone should be functioning. Everyone should have a role." -Rainer, p.16
 - ◆ Oneness, not Sameness: John 17:20-22

- ***Membership Means Everything We Say and Do Is Based on a Biblical Foundation of Love*** (1 Corinthians 12:31b, chapter 13)
 - ◆ A More Excellent Way: Unconditional Love (agape)
 - ◆ The characteristics of love listed are RELATIONAL. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

- ***Church Membership is Functioning Membership***
 - ◆ "Biblical church membership gives without qualification. Biblical membership views the tithes and offerings as joyous giving. There are no strings attached. Biblical church membership serves and ministers as a natural way of doing things." - Thom Rainer, p.15
 - ◆ BIBLICAL membership has two requirements: Give abundantly and serve without hesitation.
 - ◆ The question is not IF we should be serving our church, but HOW we can best serve our church.

Session 1 Pledge :

I am a church member.

I like the metaphor of membership. It's not membership as in a civic organization or country club. It's the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it (1 Cor. 12:27). Because I am a member of the body of Christ, I must be a functioning member, whether I am an "eye," an "ear," or a "hand." As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I will remember that "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

Sign & Date