



Week 45 - Church Membership and Involvement

Church Membership and Involvement

And they were continuously devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42, 47)

The church is not the invention of man, but is God's idea. As such, God's plan is that every Christian be a committed and active part of a local church. God places believers in the body of Christ so they can benefit by receiving as well as giving. In so doing, the believer will be established and positioned to grow to maturity in Christ. Being integrally involved in a local church is essential to the life of a believer. In order to live a fruitful life in Christ, a believer should work toward six commitments to the local church. These six commitments can be summed up in these words: join, faithful, love, serve, give, and support.

Join: Be added to a local church family.

Since it is the will of God for all of God's children to be added to a local congregation, the Holy Spirit will lead you to the right one for you. It is not enough to say that we are committed to the universal church. We must also be joined to a local body where we have a pastor, "spiritual family," and a place to serve, grow and become fruitful. As the Paul wrote, "But now God has placed the members each one of them in the body just as He desired" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Here are some questions to ask when choosing the right church:

1. Where did you meet the Lord and start a relationship with God? Where did your faith begin and with whom? What would they recommend?
2. Where are your significant Christian relationships? To whom are you accountable?
3. What is the Holy Spirit revealing to you? Certainly the Holy Spirit desires to place each person in the body according to His will: "But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Being added to a local church is a significant part of our life journey. This choice directs where we will serve, how we will grow, and the people we will fellowship with in this life. It's not an option for the believer, but it is a blessing, and critical to fulfilling one's calling:

Additional Scriptures for Study: Colossians 2:2; 1 Peter 2:5

Faithful: Be faithful to continue.

Commitment to a church includes the fruitful seasons of church life as well as the difficult times. Anyone can fellowship with a church when there is congregational momentum, but the Lord desires loyalty and faithful service to continue even through times of hardship. This includes participation through attending services as well as prayer and financial support for the church. Commitment to a local church also means upholding the vision of the senior pastor and church leadership. In the end it is not those who run in the race, but those who finish, who shall receive the reward.

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Additional Scriptures for Study: John 8:31; 1 John 2:19, 24

Love: Be loving, kind and forgiving.

Having a good attitude and a fervent heart of love helps build the house of God. Too often grudges and petty complaints hinder us from enjoying the people of God. Hebrews 12:15 warns us to avoid bitterness because it can take root in a congregation and defile many. Almost everyone has a story of being wounded by a friend, hurt by one having spiritual authority or offended by someone they thought they could trust. Such experiences, while sometimes very painful, are an opportunity for acting like our Lord: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). Pain hurts and fears are not excuses for disobeying God’s Word to bless and befriend your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Although we are living in a fallen world, Christ is raising up a people of the cross – a people who live in forgiveness, reconciliation and healing. All the other external responsibilities to Christ’s church flow out of these internal characteristics of love, kindness, forgiveness, and acceptance of others.

Review

1. Whose idea is the church?
2. Why should a believer be added to or join a local church?
3. Where can we as believers find our destiny and spiritual fulfillment in life?