

Declaring and Displaying the Gospel Together

Is Membership Really Necessary?

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

God wants you in a clearly identified relationship with a local church.

1. What is the nature of the church?

a. It is _____, yet _____.

Acts 20:29-30

2 Timothy 2:16-19

1 John 2:19

b. It is _____, yet _____.

Ephesians 5:25

Acts 14:27

1 Corinthians 1:2, etc.

The gathering of the _____ church is something we are meant to _____.

The gathering of the _____ church is something we are meant to _____ now.

2. Should you participate in a local church?

a. This question _____ a basic _____ of church.

We do not "go to church." The church gathers.

Acts 14:27

If you have no part in the _____, then you have no part in _____.

1 Corinthians 12:12ff

b. You cannot be _____ of the church _____ from a church.

3. Should your connection to a local church be clearly identified?

a. The _____ were clearly identified with their churches.

Acts 2:41-47

Acts 11:22, 26; 12:1

b. Clear identification is necessary for a proper _____.

Matthew 18:17

1 Peter 5:1-3

Hebrews 13:17

Is Church Membership Really Necessary?

READY

What are some common clubs people join? Why do people join these clubs?

SET & GO Primary Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Supplementing Texts: Acts 14:27; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3

Set 1 Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 aloud. Answer the following questions:

To whom was Paul writing (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2)?

When Paul writes of feet, eyes, and ears, to whom is he really referring?

According to v 18, which members* has God placed in the body?

How “connected” are these members* to be to one another (cf. v 26)?

Set 2 Briefly discuss: *Though believers are baptized into the universal church (v 13), God gives each a part in a local body (v 18). The relationships Paul prescribes here and in Romans 12 only makes sense in the context of people connected to one another locally. The need for one another (v 21-22) and the shared suffering and honor (v 26) confirm this. Though we look forward to the gathering of the universal church when Christ returns, we are meant to live out our faith now in close connection to a local church.*

Go 2a We live in a consumeristic culture with countless choices. How has this impacted our view of church?

Go 2b Paul taught that we need one another (v 21-22, 26). What would happen if your eye were not committed to your body? How does this correspond to our relationships with one another?

Go 2c Discuss why it is not possible to participate in the universal church in the ways Paul prescribes here.

Set 3 Briefly discuss: *Acts 14:27 makes it clear that the church is a **people** who gather. This particular people had formally commissioned Paul and Barnabas (v 26) and were gathered to receive a report from them. It seems clear that the membership* of this church had to have been clearly identified.*

Go 3a We often think of a church as an organization that may be joined rather than as a people with whom we identify and with whom we gather. How does this affect the way we think about church?

Go 3b When you think about declaring your membership* in a particular church, are you thinking more about “joining” or making it clear that you are a part (see previous question)? What is the difference?

Go 3c Formal identification with a local church is a way to clarify the relationship we have with one another. Why are we tempted to resist this kind of clear identification?

Set 4 Briefly discuss: *In Matthew 18:17 the **church** is to be told of unrepentance. In Hebrews 13:17 believers are commanded to submit to leaders, and leaders will be accountable for certain souls. In 1 Peter 5:1-3 elders are told to care for the sheep “allotted” to them. These passages require a clear identification of those who are members* of the church. These relationships could not otherwise function as prescribed. Who should be told? To whom should you submit? For whom are the elders accountable?*

Go 4a What are some common reasons given for not becoming a “member” of a church? Discuss the **focus** of these reasons (e.g. are they Christ-focused or self-focused, worldly or godly, biblical or “rational”).

Go 4b If a person has not identified himself with a local church in a way that makes it clear that he is a part, how will that potentially confuse the relationship, especially when the church must make key decisions or act together toward shared goals?

Go 4c Any method used to help people clearly identify themselves with a local church will be imperfect. How should the gospel shape your attitude toward these imperfect processes?

FINISH

Have you clearly identified yourself with a local church in the way that they prescribe? If not, why not?

*“Members” is the term that Paul uses in both Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. It refers to the various “parts” that make up the church.