

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Introduction: The church is God's organization to accomplish His will in the lives of believers and through its work bring glory to Him.

See Ephesians 3:21, The Bible teaches that "Every Christian Should Belong to a local Independent Church!"

-A Christian who claims to be saved and does not get involved in a local N.T. church & just attends when he feels like it, he never really gets going for God.

-He just loaf arounds in his Christianity, is never very spiritual, and is more interested in carnal activities such as ball games, fishing and boating than he is in spiritual things.

-As a rule, Christians who are active in a church that is on fire for God, doing right and going by the Bible, grow spiritually and serve the Lord.

-A person who is a member of a scriptural, N.T., church seems to grow and become a strong spiritual individual, a good witness, a good prayer warrior and a good student of the Word of God.

-Someone who is a member of a weak church or not a member of a local church seems to be weak spiritually and only interested in carnal things.

-Every Christian who wants to grow, serve God, worship God, and learn to love God and become more like God is going to be associated with the institution that God has established, the local church.

A. The Essence of the Church

1. Defined: *The Church-a body of called-out believers immersed after salvation,

*Having two offices, (1) Pastor - also known as elder or bishop. Qualifications: I Tim 3 & Titus 1:5-9.

-The apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles according to Rom. 15:15-16, Galatians 2:7, and our example in 1 Cor. 11:1.

-Acts 14:23, Paul & Barnabas established local churches, and "ordained them elders in every church"

-(2)and Deacon - See Acts 6.

*Sovereign in policy (not part of a hierarchial system), and banded together for worship, work, obervance of baptism and communion, and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel.

*It should be: (indigenous and independent)

-Indigenous = native, having originated in a particular region.

**Before we go any further, we want to make a distinction between the two churches mentioned in the Bible.

-We have just defined one of them which this study will primarily focus on and the is (1) a local physical group of called-out members.

-1-

-The local church was started by the Lord Jesus Christ as a called out assembly of believers.

-The local church mentioned in Matthew 16:18 is not yet the spiritual body of Christ, but a group of called-out individuals

*(2) After Acts 2, "Day of Pentecost", the spiritual body of Christ composed of saved believers called "the church" in Ephesians 1:22-23.

-A person today becomes a member of the spiritual body of Christ, the instant they get saved they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ or "the church"

-See I Cor. 12:12-13 & Gal. 3:26-28.

*Continuing with on study local church a physical group of called-out members.

*It should be:

a. Self governing. Acts 20:28

b. Self sustained or supporting. Acts 20:32-35

c. Self propagating. II Corinthians 5:18-20.

*Some other things about the church.

2. Designed by God. Eph. 1:4; 3:1-6.

3. Disclosed by Jesus Christ.

-Matthew 16:18

-Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus discloses to be a local physical called-out group to bring problems before.

4. Developed by the Holy Spirit.

-The disciples were banded together, they stuck together, they worked together, they worshipped together, they prayed together, and they had a common purpose and common goal.

-However, they did not have a common nature until Acts 2, when they were born again and received the nature of God.

*Acts 1:5 - Jesus promises the apostles they will be baptized by the Holy Ghost.

*Acts 2:4 - Promise fulfilled. Day of Pentecost, is the "not many days hence" of Act 1:5.

*Acts 5:14 - Believers added to the church because of the work of the Holy Spirit working through the believer.

*I Cor. 12:13-20, The local N.T. churches are a picture of the spiritual church.

-Every member of the body needs the others and there should be no divisions.

- No member not included in the body.
- When a Christian is not in a local church, he is like a part of the body that is cut off from the rest of the body.
- Can he live? No, he will die.
- *Note: Eph. 4:7-16
- *Eph. 2:19-20 - The apostle and prophets are the foundation of the church.
- It was started by Jesus Christ, and it was perpetuated by the apostles and prophets.
- They began local New Testament Churches in Jersalem, Antioch, Galatia, Persidia, and Syria in the book of Acts.
- *Acts 14:23 - Establishment of churches and ordaining of pastor. Work of spirit filled believers.

-2-

B. Active Membership is Essential for:

1. A testimony of Salvation.

- An instant a person is saved he is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual and invisible body of Chirst.
- In order for people to see you, as a Christian have become a part of this spiritual body, you join a physical church composed of people who are members of the body of Christ.
- Ephesians 5:30-32.
- Eph. 5:30 - "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."
- As members of His body spiritually, then we ought to be members of His body locally and physically.
- We ought to place ourselves into the membership of a local New Testament Church.
- Gal. 3:26.
- Acts 5:11-14.

2. A trial of Separation.

- Church membership is also a testimony of separation and identification.
- We want to identify with the people of God, the church of God, the work of God, and the spirit of God.
- The Spirit works through the local New Testament church which the Lord instituted and for which he called leaders.

*Acts 5:13-14, says - read.

- This passage speaks of people who joined the church and others who didn't.
- Those who joined were saved and born again and separated from the world, with a different outlook from the people of the world.
- Their outlook was spiritual and their focal point was Jesus Christ and the Bible, and because of that they suffered persecution and other people wouldn't join them.

- That is a real testimony; that is a peculiarity.
- No one will join a good, sound, Bible-believing church for social reasons.
- It will cost him too much.
- A local New Testament church is a picture of separation from this world.
- A member is saying to this world that he is more interested in the work of God and spiritual growth as a Christian than in worldly activities or worldly entertainment.

*II Corinthians 6:14 - read.

- "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"
- The opposite is also true.
- You ought to be yoked together with believers, and the only place that you can be truly yoked together with believers is in a local New Testament church.
- You are not to be members of lodges or organizations that cause you to fellowship with the unsaved.
- You have a different nature and a different purpose in life.
- 3-
- Their nature is carnal, earthly, sensual, physical, and sinful.
- Their purpose is making money, having a good time and pleasing themselves.
- They have no interest in Jesus Christ or the Bible.
- What kind of fellowship could you have with those people unless you just fellowship around what they like?
- They will never fellowship around what a Christian should like.
- They will never want to talk about heaven and Jesus Christ except to use his name in vain.
- Church membership is a testimony of your separation from the world and identification with believers.
- Church membership also pictures a future separation.
- One of these days God is going to separate the body of Christ, the Christians, once and for all, and every time you go to church on Sunday or Wednesday night, you are telling the world that you are leaving them and coming back later.
- That is a picture of the church's future.
- The whole body of Christ, the church, is going to leave this earth and then come back seven years later at the Second Coming.
- 2 Thess. 2:1, says - read.
- We are going to be gathered together unto Him one day in the future and we are going to be with Him forever according to John 14:1-4, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, and I Cor. 15:51-53.
- Every time we go to church we picture that future calling-out of the body of Christ to be with the Lord.