

## HEALTHY CHURCH 9: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### 1. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS UNAVOIDABLE

1 Corinthians 12:26-27 (see Acts 9:4)

- A union which is deep (12:26) and significant (12:13)

Applications

### 2. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IS IDENTIFIABLE

**Q: “Is Church Membership a Biblical idea?”**

“In one sense, no. Open up the New Testament, and you won’t find a story about, say, Priscilla and Aquila moving to the city of Rome, checking out one church, then another, and finally deciding to join a third. From what we can tell, nobody went ‘church shopping’ because there was only one church in each community. In that sense, you won’t find a list of church members in the New Testament.” (Mark Dever, *What is healthy church*, p93).

**Biblical evidence:**

**(a) Illustrations that are used to describe local churches – they are definable**

*A body* (1 Cor.12)

*A flock of sheep, a building, a household* (Acts 20:28, Ephesians 2:21, 1 Timothy 3:15).

**(b) The meaning of “the whole church”**

1 Corinthians 14:23, “If, therefore, the whole church comes together...”

**(c) Instructions for pastoral care**

Pastors to care for “all the flock” (e.g. Acts 20:28, Philippians 1:1, Hebrews 13:17).

**(d) The meaning of the word “join”**

No-one dared “join” the church (Acts 5:13) = very deep commitment  
= a word used both of sex and union with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:16, 17)

**(e) Instructions for church discipline**

1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 12-13: include... in order to exclude

Matthew 18:15-18, "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

**3. COMMON QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS...**

**Q: Is it possible to stick with Jesus – but have a non-formal or even casual relationship to a local church?**

**Q: What if you've been hurt by a church before?**

#### **4. APPLICATION: WITH GOD'S HELP BE A FAITHFUL CHURCH MEMBER.**

##### **(a) Church membership at Immanuel**

= You say: "I'm converted, pursuing holiness, and committed to Immanuel"

= The church says: "We agree!"

(See church membership covenant)

##### **(b) With God's help, be an increasingly faithful church member**

Distinguish: *comfort-based commitment* and *calling-based commitment*.

Think: Why do you come, and keep coming to church?

Social or personal reasons

vs

Obey God and delight in His church

Starts with commitment up front (a bit like a marriage!):

*deciding* to sacrifice, to gather, to encourage and to guard one another

Requires investment in relationships

