

## **Devotion to One Another - Part 2**

Romans 12:1-13; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 1-15-17

We have begun a series on church membership. And to understand what that is really about we need to think in terms of ‘the human body’ and ‘devotion.’ When we talk about “church membership” we are talking about devotion to a local body of believers and what that means.

### **1. Church ‘membership’ is body language.**

*What should I see when I look at myself?* Paul is using ‘body metaphors’ to describe our relationship to other Christians. I am to picture myself as a Christian as being part of a body – the body of Christ. – Romans 12:4-5. Paul elaborates on this picture in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Bottom line: We need each other more than we realize!

### **2. Church membership is as clear in the NT as the doctrine of the Trinity.**

*Is Church membership biblical?* We can’t find the phrase ‘church membership’ in the Bible. We don’t see a clear command to officially join a church. Neither can we find a clear statement of the doctrine of the Trinity but we argue based on clear implications in Scripture. There are clear indications that a real, conscious commitment to one local body of believers is the implied expectation that Christ has for every believer. *To be devoted you have to have something or someone to be devoted to.* - Romans 12:10. Marry (commit yourself to; devote yourself to; all that you have and all that you are to one local church for the long haul) a church! There are many strains of evidence in the NT that support this implied truth of church membership.

#### **A. The word for ‘church’ means ‘assembly’ in the NT.**

- ‘Church’ (ekklesia) is the translation of the Greek word for ‘assembly’ or ‘gathering’ and speaks to the fact that Jesus intended the church to be a public institution as a testimony to the world. - Ephesians 3:10
- Identification with Christ through participation in the ordinances implies church membership. – 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 33-34
- There appears to have been clear boundaries regarding the local churches. - 1 Corinthians 5:4; 14:23
- The NT letters were written to specific, defined gatherings of believers. (1 Thessalonians 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 16:19
- Believers are commanded not to forsake these specific, defined gatherings. – Hebrews 10:23-25; 1 Corinthians 11:33

#### **B. The life of a believer is described in the NT as a life with other believers and is more than just a casual, undefined relationship.**

- The example of the early Church is that people believed and were baptized and were added to the church. - Acts 2:41-42, 47
- If you read the NT carefully, the idea of being a ‘Lone Ranger Christian’ who is not committed to a local body of believers is foreign to the NT. - Acts 6:5; 8:1; 14:23; 15:17; 20:17)

- Letters of commendation spoken of and seen in the NT imply church membership. - Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1-2

**C. The ‘one another commands’ are best understood and practiced in a local church setting, especially those regarding serving and showing grace.**

- The one another commands imply a commitment to a particular group of believers. – John 13:14; 13:34; 15:17; Romans 12:10; 12:16; 14:19; 15:7; 16:16; 1 Corinthians 12:25; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; 5:13; 5:15; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24; 1 Peter 4:8-9
- The commands to serve and use your gifts to build up the church implies a commitment to a local body of believers. – Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10
- The metaphor of the body working together to glorify God and serve Christ implies a commitment to a local church. – 1 Corinthians 12:20-21, 27
- There is a beauty in belonging to a local expression of the family of God and trusting God for good through an imperfect church over time. – Ephesians 4:2; 4:32; Colossians 3:13

**D. Submission to leadership requires some kind of membership in a local church.**

- Submission to church leadership requires membership in a local church. – Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17
- Pastoral responsibility requires membership in a local church. – Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3
- Giving to support the ministry of the Word and the needy saints implies a commitment to a local body. – Galatians 6:6-8; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
- The election of ‘deacons’ to meet particular needs in the church implies church membership. - Acts 6:5
- Lists of widows and possibly, lists of members also implies church membership (certainly there was an awareness of who was in the church at Rome). - 1 Timothy 5:9; Acts 5:14; 16:5

**E. The concept of accountability and the practice of church discipline requires some kind of church membership.**

- Accountability to other believers implies a commitment to a particular local church. - Romans 15:14; Ephesians 5:21; Colossians 3:16; James 5:16
- Church discipline commanded by Christ requires membership in a local church. - Matthew 18:15-18
- In order to be ‘put out of the church,’ you must first be ‘put in.’ - 1 Corinthians 5:11-13

**3. Church membership is love to Christ and others.**

*What does it look like to present yourself to God to do His will?* It looks like presenting yourself to a local body of believers to serve with your gifts and to love them as Christ calls you to love them. In the context, the immediate, visible application of this, in Paul’s argument, is a commitment to the local church (body of Christ). When rightly understood and practiced, church membership is the outworking of love to Christ and those who follow Him. – Romans 12:1-2. Link between Loving God/Christ and Loving His People - John 14:15; John 15:17; 1 John 4:19-21; John 21:15-17; Matthew 25:31-46