

## The Church

### Local Congregation: Sterling OPC, Part 2

#### Fellowship

##### I. Foundational

- A. I must have the fellowship of other believers, around the Word, in order to know my own heart, my own sin, and my need to grow in grace. In our fallen nature, we are self-deceivers – we lie about our own hearts to ourselves all the time! “It’s not that big a deal...it’s the other person’s fault...”
- B. In order to minister to Christ’s brethren (Matthew 25:34-40), don’t I kind of have to be around them?!?

##### II. Biblical

- A. Hebrews 3:12-13 – progression of the heart
  1. Unbelieving -> falling away -> hardened
  2. Solution is “exhort one another every day”
    - We are meant to live in community with one another; we need that community in order to maintain growth in grace
- B. John 13:34,35 – visible witness in community is basis of our identification as Christ’s followers
- C. John 17:20-23 – historic proof of the reality of Christ’s relationship with the Father

##### III. Ecclesiastic

- A. Ephesians 1:15-23 – God has raised Christ “gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body”
- B. 1 Cor. 12:13 – Baptism is admission into “one body” – the sign of identification with Christ’s body, the church
- C. Ephesians 4:1-16
  1. Unity in the body must be diligently pursued (v.1 – “urge”)
  2. The body is considered, not as some mystical thing, but as a practical organism made up of people with various gifts and callings (v.11)
  3. The body is necessary for our growth in grace (v. 12,13)

The “unchurched Christian” is a historic anomaly – a product of 20<sup>th</sup> century American individualism. Even churches that are full of error (see Galatians) are still considered the body of Christ (Gal. 1:1-4). To try to “go it alone” as a Christian is counter to what God’s Word commands, counter to the very foundation of our witness to the world, and ultimately is our own testimony to the world that Jesus Christ is not sent from the Father (John 17:20-23)