

“Membership”

1. Personal relationship vs corporate relationship
2. Neglect of the “corporateness” of the ordinances of the church is a symptom of consumerism. Service involves not just doing things but being something.
3. Christ’s commitment and ours
  - a. To whom did Christ commit Himself?
    - i. The Lord is not ashamed of His church—but our age is endemic with people and congregations who are
  - b. In and among whom do we commit ourselves to Him?
  - c. Unanimous testimony of the New Testament: to belong to the body of Christ means, in all cases, to belong to a local body of Christ. Christ only has one expression of His church on earth: assemblies (local congregations, assemblies of elders)
  - d. How has that belonging come about (divinely speaking)?—1Cor 12:18
  - e. How does this belonging come about (humanly speaking)?
  - f. In doing this, we have not done something new, but only externalized what was already spiritually true.
    - i. Consider the NT images of the church. Membership is essential to them.
    - ii. Consider the NT description and instruction of believers: it is always in the context of their functioning in a local congregation
4. Evidences of membership in the New Testament
  - a. Records: Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4; Romans 16 and similar
  - b. Identification: Acts 20:28. God has chosen and purchased particular people, and set over them particular people. And they are not the ones whom we would have chosen.
  - c. Authority: 1Thess 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17; Titus 2:15
  - d. Fellowship
    - i. One-anothers
    - ii. Spiritual gifts (no free agents!)—Romans 12, 1Corinthians 12, 1Corinthians 13
    - iii. Hebrews 10:19-25
    - iv. Discipline must be exercised by known quantity
    - v. Excommunication must be from a known quantity to outside of it
5. Detriments of the neglect of church membership
  - a. Disobedience to Jesus
  - b. Stunting our spiritual growth
    - i. Bouncing when it gets difficult hinders stretching us
    - ii. Bouncing when we run into disagreement hinders correction
    - iii. Just as many of us discover our maturity was much thinner than we thought by marriage, so also many find that their spiritual maturity is much thinner than previously thought by membership
  - c. Plays into the hands of the devil
    - i. Ephesians 4:25-32
    - ii. 2Corinthians 2:5-11
    - iii. 1Peter 5:1-9
    - iv. 1Corinthians 5:5
    - v. 1Timothy 1:20
    - vi. Luke 22:31-32
  - d. Hinders evangelism. They will know us by our love. When membership works, it's literally a miracle. But that's the point. We are a miraculous people. Take away this otherwise-impossible-to-explain phenomenon, and you take away one of the church's great gifts/tools for evangelism.