



Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

Lesson 14: The Goal and Pursuit of Church Membership

INTRODUCTION

Many people think of church membership as simply putting your name on a list. If that's all it is, it's no wonder that they would be indifferent toward the idea. But based on our studies so far, a picture of church membership should be developing in our minds that is far more than having your name on a list.

1. What do you think are some of the ways that church membership should impact your life as a Christian?

MAIN IDEA

The goal of church membership is that every single church member would help the whole church grow to maturity in Christ. Every member of the church is also called to overcome divisions and pursue unity in the church in order to reflect the church's union with Christ. In this lesson, we will see what the Bible says about the goal and pursuit of every church member in the church.

I. The Goal of Church Membership

In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts us to live in unity in the church in light of the unity we have in Christ (vv. 1–6). Then, after explaining how Christ conquered death and gave gifts to his church (vv. 7–10), he specifically names some of those gifts and talks about the purpose for which Christ gave them:

Ephesians 4:11–16

1. What are the gifts Christ has given to the church (v. 11)? _____

2. For what purpose did Christ give these gifts to the church (v. 12)? _____

3. According to this passage, who is it who does the work of ministry (v. 12)? How is this different from the way we often think about "ministry" in the church? _____

4. What's the goal of the church's growth (v. 13)? What does this teach us about how we should—or shouldn't—evaluate our church? _____

5. What threat to the church does Paul have in view in verse 14? _____

6. What does Paul say will happen once we all attain to mature manhood (v. 14)?

7. By what means does the church grow up to maturity (vv. 15–16)?

8. What percentage of the body needs to contribute in order for it to grow properly (v. 16)?

9. What are some ways in which a biblical practice of church membership helps contribute to the kind of growth this passage describes?

10. In light of this picture of every member of the body contributing to the body's growth, how would you describe the goal of church membership? _____

II. The Pursuit of Church Members

After encouraging the Corinthians based on the evidences of God's grace he saw in them, Paul begins to address an issue of utmost importance in the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 1:10–17

1. What does Paul appeal to the Corinthians to do (v. 10)? _____

2. How many ways does he state his appeal (v. 10)? What does this tell us about how important this issue of divisions in the church was to Paul? _____

3. What was reported to Paul about the Corinthian church (v. 11)? What specific examples of this does Paul give (v. 12)? _____

4. What attitude does the statement “I follow Paul” or “I follow Apollos” express? What’s wrong with this attitude toward Christian leaders? (Hint: See verse 17 for one reason why the Corinthians may have been aligning themselves with some leaders over others.) _____

5. What’s Paul’s first response to these divisions in the church (v. 13)? _____

6. Why does Paul ask, “Is Christ divided?” What does this teach us about the nature of the church and why unity in the church is so important? (Hint: See also 1 Corinthians 12, especially verses 12 and 13.) _____

Just as Paul insists that the church must be united because it is the body of Christ, and Christ is not divided, so he reminds the Corinthians that it was not Paul who was crucified for them, and they were not baptized into the name of Paul (vv. 13–15). Rather, Christ was crucified for them, and they were baptized into his name. They belong to him, they are saved by him, they are one body in him, and so they should live in a way that expresses that unity.

7. The Corinthians were wrongly attaching themselves to one Christian leader or another at the expense of the church’s unity. What are some of the right ways we should relate to leaders in the church? (See Phil. 1:15–18; 1 Thess. 5:12–13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 3 John 5–8) _____

8. How do these biblical ways of relating to local church leaders help build the church’s unity? _____

9. What are some ways that you can seek to build unity in your local church? Give specific examples.¹ _____

¹ Bobby Jamieson, [*Committing to One Another: Church Membership*](#), ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31–33.