

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: Body Building

Title: Membership

Speaker: Matt Ewert

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Date: April 22, 2018



WARM-UP

Let's pretend (or maybe it's real for you)... If you are/were **not** a member at South Abbotsford Church, what would be the most likely negative thoughts you might have about becoming a member of this church:

- ⇒ No thank you; this church is so far away from what I would like to see in a church. I'll do my duty to attend but beyond that—naaaahh.
- ⇒ Membership is mostly about obligations, things I don't have time for—stuff like being pressured to serve in church programs. I've got better things to do with my time.
- ⇒ Membership is about money. It's mostly about paying the pastors and creating expensive programs that simply don't get the job done.
- ⇒ Becoming a believer makes me a part of the "universal church." That's all I need. I don't need the claptrap of the "institutional church" that messes up so often that I'm just not getting involved.
- ⇒ Other excuses (oops – reasons!)

DISCUSSION

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Let's re-read the text and highlight some of key terms and phrases that catch your eye. Be ready to share those with the group.

A Quick Review:

- 1 Corinthians 12:27: Membership in the church is *God's idea*. *Membership is a legitimate term!*
- 1 Corinthians 12:14-17: It's a **FUNCTIONING** membership – You are a player, not a spectator!
- **Some Key Markers of Functioning:**
 - * 1 Corinthians 13 – Unconditional love for each other
 - * Philippians 2:1-2 – Unity
 - * John 13:35 – Unity is critical to the mission
- **Unity Killers: that produce negative attitudes toward the "church."**
 - * Self-interest – 1 Corinthians 12:25-26
 - * Gossip – James 3:8
 - * Unforgiving hearts – Colossians 3:13
- **Reframing Membership:**
 - * There is no such thing as a lone-ranger, disembodied follower of Jesus
 - * The need to overcome negative views of the church: skepticism, suspicion, an anti-establishment bent
 - * What is the Gospel? A full-orbed understanding of the Gospel will go a long way to overcome negativity toward membership:

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DISCUSSION

- ⇒ **A Partial Gospel:** "Jesus and me" elements that create "nice people" but an incomplete Gospel
 - Eternal salvation
 - A relationship with Jesus
 - Embrace the fruits of the Spirit
 - Avoid evil
 - If this really is the essence of the Gospel, then who needs membership?
- ⇒ **A Bigger Gospel:**
 - Includes all of the above plus...
 - **The Key Element:** The Gospel is primarily **about Jesus' Kingdom:**
 - * Jesus claimed to be a King; that's why He was killed
 - * Jesus died on the cross to make us citizens of a kingdom, to make us a body, to make us a people.
 - * We are part of that story – dead to self, dead to sin, alive to a King who is Master; serving alongside with other Kingdom citizens
 - Biblically, it's inconceivable not to engage positively as a member of Christ's body!
 - * To bad mouth the church (Christ's bride) is to badmouth Jesus, the bridegroom. Ephesians 5:25-27
 - * We should look for opportunities to declare our love for the King, and to demonstrate our commitment to the bride of Christ.

Applications and Ponderings:

- How would you distinguish "Costco membership" from "church membership"?
- Discuss your responses to Pastor Matt's closing statement: *"Membership in the body of Christ, the church, is a gift from God. It's not a legalistic obligation. It's not about country club perks. It's not a license for entitlements. It's a gift. A gift from God. A gift that we should treasure with great joy and anticipation."* —Thom Rainer
- To what degree would you agree that our membership in the local expression of his body, the church is a gift, a treasure?
- Finding clarity: Can you answer the question, "What's my contribution to the health of Christ's body, the church?"
- How has this message transformed your thinking on membership in the church?
- Praying:
 - ⇒ For unity and love for your brothers and sisters; for the leadership, for transformational impact.
 - ⇒ Pray for those who challenge your love for Christ's body – the unity killer issues.