

What is Church Membership

11-18-18

The New Testament places great importance in our membership in the church universal and our membership in a local congregation. We know that becoming a Christian adds us to the church (Acts 2:38-47). We also ought to know that we are accountable to God for this relationship, as many aspects of our judgment pertain to church membership (Matt. 25 for example). But understanding that membership is not always easy, especially on issues such as placing membership (how is it done) or the withdrawal of membership (what does that mean). Fortunately, the New Testament provides us with five allegories that give us a sense of Church membership.

1. Church Membership is like being a part of a body

But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary - 1 Corinthians 12:20-22

Our membership is like that of a physical body

- 1) We should have attachment to each other
- 2) The dangers of infection
- 3) The hurt of separation

2. Church Membership is like joining a unit military

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:3-4

Our membership is like that of a military unit; the universal church is the military branch, and the local congregation is like our assigned unit.

- 1) At war with the world
- 2) The desperate dependency on each other
- 3) The evils of forsaking comrades in battle

3. Church Membership is like becoming a citizen

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, Ephesians 2:19

Our membership is like that of citizenship; the universal church is our nation, and the local church is like our community, where we actually carry out the rights and privileges of citizenship.

- 1) Loyalty to our new nation
- 2) Policy of immigration
- 3) The penalties of treason

4. Church Membership is like being hired to work

These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me. Colossians 4:11

Our membership is like that of a company; the universal church is like the corporation, and the local church is like the office or worksite in which we actually carry out our job.

- 1) The rewards of our labor if we remain
- 2) Each of us doing our part

5. Church Membership is like being adopted into a family

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, - Ephesians 1:5

Our membership is like that of a family; the universal church is like our familial name, while the local church is our immediate family.

- 1) Bound by love and by blood
- 2) Tightly knit together

From these examples we can see that membership in the local church ought to be seen as a prized possession with rewards. It also comes with obligations and expectations for the members. Finally, we need to consider that we see in all of these comparisons that there are great penalties for abandonment.