

## Choosing a Church Family 11-10-19 AM

**DISCIPLESHIP** is the most important decision that anyone in life. Jesus describes this choice in Luke 14:25-35. If we choose to become a disciple, we are following Jesus into His kingdom (1 Thessalonians 2:12). Doing this makes us *citizens* of that kingdom. **CITIZENSHIP** then is our place in the kingdom of heaven (Philippians 3:20). In Ephesians 2:19 Paul reminds us that there are others who are "*fellow citizens*" in the kingdom; our relationship with them is called **FELLOWSHIP**. In that same passage Paul says that being in fellowship with other citizens of the kingdom makes us *members* of the household of God. That condition in the household of God is called **MEMBERSHIP**. Membership most accurately describes your place in a local church (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

DISCIPLESHIP leads to CITIZENSHIP which leads to FELLOWSHIP which leads to MEMBERSHIP. If we cannot separate discipleship and citizenship, then we cannot separate discipleship, citizenship and fellowship. If we cannot separate discipleship, citizenship and fellowship, then we cannot separate discipleship, citizenship, fellowship and membership. Therefore, to be a DISCIPLE of Jesus Christ means we must also be a MEMBER of a local church. If someone ceases in discipleship, they cease in citizenship, fellowship, and membership.

Membership is of great importance to a Christian life of Discipleship. Consider many of the requirements of being a disciple; how else can you fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) outside of being a member in a local church? How else can you avoid the willful sin mentioned in Hebrews 10:24-26? Our ability to demonstrate we have eternal life is by our relationship with other members (1 John 3:14-17).

What makes membership different is the matter of choice. While there is only one kingdom, there are many congregations around us. Some are merely the congregations of men, and not at all approved by Christ. Others are congregations that belong to Christ, but vary in their condition of approval (as in Revelation 2-3). Still others may be completely approved by vary on their physical conditions (things such as size and location). All of this means we must be wise in making a decision in our membership in a location church.

What considerations should we make in choosing the local church with whom we will be members? First, we ought to consider the importance of the balance what you can give a congregation with what they can give you. Meaning, we need to find a church which will provide us with spiritual support while at the same time offer the opportunity to serve. We need to avoid looking for the wrong things (not bad things, but the things that are not important). Too many look for a local church that reflects their desires, not their abilities. Many look for a church full of young people, or just full of a large number of people, because being there is easy. This is an example of looking for the wrong things.

When we look to being a member of a local church, we need to commit to being an *intentional* member. We must commit to discover what is expected of members by the whole. We need to be a brother/sister to your brethren. Ultimately, we must avoid just being there; instead, we must commit to understand what it means to be them. *Don't be there, be them!*

There are great consequences from being wise in choosing a church. Because it is the right choice, we know that God is with us when we are committed. We should be pleased to know that Godly people profit from our efforts. Finally, we can have trust that our brethren want the best for us, and confident that they know what that is.