

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

Lesson 25: *“Unite with Some Church”*
Scriptures: Matthew 16: 13-20; Acts 27: 27-44

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand the importance of uniting with Christian community/church should we need to relocate.

Covenant Segment:

“When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word.”

“And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”. And Jesus answered and said unto him, “blessed art thou; Simon Bar-jona for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”. And I say also unto thee, “That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matt. 16:16-17.

Overview

The church is a gift from God, an instrument through which we learn God’s truth, experience God’s presence, find the support we need, and offer the support others need. We honor the giving of the gift of the church by pledging always to be a part of it, no matter the circumstances.¹ There may be good reasons for us to disconnect from our familiar place for worship such as job relocation or moving. God has established the church to be the bride for His Son, Jesus and the place for His children to gather and strengthen each other in heartfelt fellowship and relationship with Him as we are nourished by the Word of God and sing praises to Him. The closing words of the Covenant anticipate the tendency of many to loosen or lose ties that bind them to a Christian community when we relocate.² The specific location of the church is not as significant as our commitment to *carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word.*

Question #1:

Why is it important to stay connected to the church community?

- The spirit of the Covenant and the principles of God’s Word encourage us to remain on board and to stay in communion within the body of Christ.³

¹ Turner, William C. [A Journey through the Church Covenant](#) Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press (2002) 132

² Turner, William C. [A Journey through the Church Covenant](#) Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press (2002) 128

³ Turner, William C. [A Journey through the Church Covenant](#) Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press (2002) 129

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- Without a connection to a body of believers, faith can become weak, and we can take liberties with spiritual disciplines that have been source of strength.⁴

Scripture

Paul said to the centurions and to the soldiers, “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves will not be saved.” —Acts 27:31

Summary

The spirit of the covenant and the principles of God’s Word encourage us to remain where there is saving grace and in communion with the body of Christ. The church is the place where we *carry out the spirit of this Covenant and the principles of God’s Word*. All that we acknowledge and pledge in the recitation of our Church Covenant is fulfilled through God’s gifts to people who actively participate in the ministries of the church. What is it that the church does for believers who are connected to each other through fellowship? First, it is a source of truth. In a world, where there are so many false ideologies, vain philosophies that results in the destruction of life, the church gives us an opportunity to come to know life-giving truth of the Almighty God. We can dwell in the safety of God’s truth. Secondly, the church is a place where we can obtain a divine perspective on life. Paul tells us that we ought to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us. [I Peter 3: 15]. It is in the context of church life that we find the wellspring of hope—we are kept by the power of an Almighty and Sovereign God. This is what stabilizes us through all stages of life.

Question #2:

How is the church a stabilizing influence through all phases of our lives as Christians?

- While this part of the Covenant highlights relocation and reestablishing church ties, the principle it advocates applies to other critical junctures in life: marriage, childbirth, reaching a new stage of maturity, going away to school, changing jobs, time of sickness and stress. Often, as a result of these critical junctures, we realign habits and priorities, and the church can be left out.⁵
- By implication, the Covenant upholds a commitment not to the local church body but to the church universal. Based on the theology and purposes of the church explored throughout the Covenant, what more do we need to convince us of our need for the church?⁶

⁴ Turner, William C. **A Journey through the Church Covenant** Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press (2002) 129

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Scripture:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. –Hebrews 10:25

Summary

Collective and corporate worship is essential for spiritual life. As Christians we meet to glorify God in the beauty of His sanctuary with other believers. We are Christ's bride being made ready for the bridegroom. As we come together each week to worship God for his love, grace, and providential care, we also strengthen our witness to each other. There is something powerful about seeing the miraculous power of God working in each others' lives.

Question #3:

How does our connection to the Body of Christ support the church's mission to reach out to the lost?

- Our connection to the Body of Christ supports the church's mission through
- The Spirit proceeds through the church to unite those who believe on the Lord Jesus, to regenerate those who repent of their sin, to sanctify all who would grow in grace, and to empower those who would be faithful servants of Christ.⁷

Scripture:

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to admonish one another. [Romans 15:13,14]

Summary

The church, the spiritual body of Christ, is made up by believers who are united by the work of the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Spirit creates a bond of peace that binds God's people together. This is why we should remain connected with a church community of believers. The church is God's agency for sharing the Gospel. God equips and builds up the body for the advancement of the kingdom here on earth. Jesus tells us, "You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its

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savor, with what shall it be salted. It is thereafter good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. [Matt. 5: 13]. The church collectively creates a counter culture for Christ. This is the essential work of the church. Our commitment to this work means that we need to stay connected.

Questions for Reflections

- In what ways has the church provided you with spiritual and emotional grounding?
- Have there been times in your life when you have forgotten about the church? What were those times like? What did you miss? What brought you back?
- Are there good reasons people fall away from the church? What can be done to limit this from happening?

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Where we are in the Church Covenant... *

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; ***to be slow to give or take offense***, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.