

## A Biblical View of Church Membership

<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:15–16).

Over the past months, we have been studying the church and what it means to belong to a church. Last month, we learned that our Christian identity is influenced by who God says we are as a church. John McArthur stated that *We are the body of Christ. We are a koinōnia; we are a communion; we are a fellowship of one body: the body of Christ (The Body of Christ, gty.org)*. At the moment of salvation, we were uniquely placed into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). In Ephesians 5:23, we find that Christ is the head of the church, which is His body, and He is its Savior.

Pertaining to our Christian identity, regardless of status, importance, titles, and roles in the church, everyone who joined the church upon receiving Christ as their Lord and Savior, can declare, “**I am a church member.**” We will begin to explore the implications of this statement. In his book, *I Am a Church Member*, Thomas Rainer speaks of a beautiful diversity in the midst of unity in church membership (pgs.12-13) referring to 1 Cor 12: 14-26. Rainer stated that church membership means that we are all different but everyone has a necessary role or a function in the church (Rainer, pg.12). This is based upon the 1 Corinthians 12 passage where Paul’s metaphor illustrates that one may function in the church body like the hand, foot, eye, or ear does in a human body. The church has to function, but it cannot function if everyone wants to hear or see. Then, no work of the hands would be accomplished or any movement would take place by the feet in the church.

**In order to function in a way pleasing to God as a church, everything we do or say must be based on love as the Bible describes in 1 Corinthians 13:** *Love is patient, kind, rejoices in truth, bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* Rainer rightly states that *Church membership is founded on love; authentic, biblical, unconditional love* (pg.14). This is in contrast to various unfriendly, divisive, and angry antics displayed publicly by various political, civic, or social group members. Rainer adds, to the contrary, that the church is to be unified in its mission, purposes, ministries, and activities, (pg.15). The church cannot advance if the feet refuse to move in the right direction, or the hands are slapping the feet or the ears are blinding the eyes, or if the ears refuse to hear at all. Each member must be concerned about accomplishing the mission and purposes of the church in a unified manner in a spirit of love.

As a church member, you will find that some decisions must be made along the way, such as to serve or not serve, to tithe or just donate, to read the bible during church service or attend bible study, etc. Each decision requires a commitment. One such decision is to be active or as Rainer says a functioning church member. We who are church members are all supposed to function in the church. **Biblical church membership is functioning membership** (Rainer, pg.15) To function is to work, operate, or have a level of activity. In the church, it entails giving, serving, and ministering in the way our spiritual giftedness enables us to do. Every one of us were given

one or more spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. *We are exhorted to know our gifts and abilities, so we can use them best to serve the church for the glory of God* (Rainer, pg.16).

Rainer suggested that we make the following pledge, (Rainer, pg.18): *As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others.* In order to live up to this pledge biblically, we will need to study and know what God's Word says about giving, serving, ministering, evangelizing, studying, and being a blessing to others.