

A Spiritually Healthy Church

⁹ For this reason we also, since the day we heard *about it*, have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the ¹⁰ knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, ¹⁰ to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and ¹⁰ increasing in the ¹⁰ knowledge of God; [Colossians 1:9-10, NASB]

For the past several months, we have been examining what it means to belong to the church. This lesson represents the conclusion of this series. As in many churches, there are so many distractors that can prevent us from keeping the main things the main thing. In the midst of everything else, we want to stay focused on what really matters. The goal of every church member is to share the love of Christ with a lost world. By joining our local church, we have become members of God's community. With that, we are to live in communion with one another and serve the Lord together. With Christ as the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 4:15), we are called "the body of Christ" (1Cor. 12:12-14, 27).

In his book, *7 Basics of Belonging: The Meaning of Church Membership*, author Sam Rainer describes seven basics of belonging to a church. They are ***Worship, Grow, Serve, Give, Pray, Seek Unity, and Sacrifice***.

Remaining a babe in Christ should not be our vocation or final aspiration. Scripture admonishes us to **grow** in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:1). As disciples of Christ, we are to **grow spiritually**. It begins with hearing the preached or taught Word on Sundays and/or Bible studies through the week. To avoid stunted growth, we should feed our spirits and minds continually on God's Word.

Being in Christ, makes us a spiritual family. As a church family, we can encourage each other, support one another, and joyfully grow in these areas and more all to the glory of God. As part of our church membership, Sam Rainer deemed **unity** as a basic of belonging (pg. 67). **The unifying force** of every church is God's Word and God's Great Commission (pg.69). As a church, our desire is unity and to work together in harmony. In order to be truly unified, we must **seek out unity** as an act of love (Rainer, 67). A unified church must have love undergirding every fabric of its being.

Through corporate **worship**, an internal unity occurs within the body of Christ. (Rainer, pg. 19). Rainer states that a worshipping church will pray, elevate the study of the Word of God, sing together, participate in communion, and serve others, (pg.21).

Another basic of belonging in the church is **serving**. It's about sharing with others, reaching others, and serving others. We can serve in various ways in the church. Look for opportunities to serve. Each believer has a unique spiritual gift that the Holy Spirit individually measured out according to God's sovereign will and design. Spiritual gifts are given to each and every one of us (1 Peter 4:10, 1 Cor 12:7).

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. [1 Peter 4:10]

Giving is a basic of belonging (pgs. 45-53). God is constantly giving to us; life, breath, mercy, answers to prayers, protection, well-being, health, shelter, jobs, etc. Why not give back to Him with our time, talents, and treasure? God has been faithful to keep Tabernacle for 102 years. Are you faithful to do your part by honoring God today with your monetary gifts? Monetary gifts are needed to support ongoing ministries of the church, such as general maintenance, repairs, the cost of utilities, church personnel, new equipment, technology needs, Christian education, and more.

According to Sam Rainer, **prayer**, an important expectation of church membership, is critical to our spiritual health. It is the way we demonstrate our faith in God's Word and trust in His Will (pg. 55). Being in an environment of the Word and prayer impacts our lives. Praying God's Word and His Will impacts families, the church, the nation, and the world. God works all things according to the counsel of His Will [Ephesians 1:11, ESV].

"Sacrifice in the church means putting God's work above your preferences and putting others before yourself" (pg. 75). When we sacrifice some time, money, skills, or talents that we possess to help others, the church, or to serve in the church, we honor God. "Healthy churches have healthy members who are willing to live sacrificially" (pg. 80).

Above all, we want to be a **spiritually healthy church** that glorifies God. Spiritual beings need a healthy diet. It is imperative that the church feed regularly off the Word of God. God uses His Word to facilitate and nurture our growth but, we must take steps to grow. In order to live a godly life, it is essential to apply the truths of God's Word.

Our objective is to be a **Spiritually Healthy Church**. The following is adapted from Rainer's suggested ten steps as part of new church membership to honor God. (pgs. 87-90):

- 1) Read the Bible everyday
- 2) Actively engage in weekly worship attendance
- 3) Follow your church leadership as they follow Christ
- 4) Encourage people around you
- 5) Invite others to church
- 6) Share Jesus with people (Live out your Christ life)
- 7) Join a small group
- 8) Pray everyday for the church; its members, leaders and ministries
- 9) Give regularly to the church
- 10) Volunteer in a needed area of the church

Our church membership is an important part of following Christ. It is a vehicle for sharing the Word of God to the lost and an avenue to spread hope, encouragement, and spiritual healing to hurting souls. Every one of us has a part in this. Say "Yes" to God.