

What is Church Membership?

A Summary

Teaching

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Scripture

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Big Idea

Church membership is a formal commitment that baptized believers make to God and one another as they live out God's mission together in a particular time and place.

Church membership promotes unity.

Unity (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

- **In one Spirit:** The one thing all church members have in common is that we've all been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Baptized into one body:** Church members are professing Christians who have been baptized into the universal Church (all believers everywhere at all times) by a local church (a group of particular believers in a particular local context) that affirms a person's profession of faith.

Key Concept: Church members are unified by their faith in Jesus Christ. We covenant together because we share a mutual commitment to Jesus, not because we share ethnicity, interests, lifestage, or demographics.

Church membership honors diversity.

Diversity (1 Corinthians 12:14-24a)

- **Body does not consist of one member but many:** Diverse personalities, gifts, experiences, skills, etc. are what make the body healthy and beautiful.
- **God arranged the body as he chose:** God has chosen which members would possess which gifts so that the body would grow healthy and strong.
- **The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you":** We need each other.

Key Concept: The strength of the church is the diversity of its members. God has given each member to the others for the purpose of building one another up in Christ. Your gifts are not for you alone; they're meant to strengthen and encourage other members of the church.

Church membership requires priority.

Priority (1 Corinthians 12:24b-31)

- **That the members may have the same care for one another:** Church members are joined together for the purpose of caring for one another.
- **If one member suffers, all suffer:** Church membership matters because spiritual well-being matters.
- **You are the body of Christ and individually members of it:** We don't just go to church. We are the church. If the church is a people who are covenanted together in Christ, then the members of the church need to know who the other members are so they can care for and strengthen one another.

Key Concept: Church membership is not a luxury, it's a necessity. We covenant together because we need to know who's committed to our well-being, and whose well-being we're committing to. Church membership makes explicit what 1 Corinthians 12 describes as implicit.