

Committing to One Another

THE GOAL OF MEMBERSHIP

Intro: As we begin today's study, which will address the goal of church membership, think about the following question:

What do you think are some of the ways that church membership should impact your life as a Christian?

Many people think of church membership as simply putting your name on a list. If that's all it is, it's no wonder that they would be indifferent toward the idea. But based on our studies so far, a picture of church membership should be developing in our minds that is far more than having your name on a list.

The goal of church membership is that every single church member would help the whole church grow to maturity in Christ.

In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts us to live in unity in the church in light of the unity we have in Christ (vv. 1–6). Then, after explaining how Christ conquered death and gave gifts to his church (vv. 7–10), he specifically names some of those gifts and talks about the purpose for which Christ gave them:

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: ¹⁴ That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: ¹⁶ From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:11–16)

1. *What are the gifts Christ has given to the local church (v. 11)?*

The gifts Christ has given to the local church are apostles, prophets, evangelists, and the pastors and teachers (v. 11). The Apostles and prophets were specific individuals used by God to communicate and expound upon the fundamental doctrines of Christianity which were still being revealed during their lifetime. Those gifts are passed down to us in the writings of the epistles. Evangelists are primarily the church planters of today. Pastors and teachers are used today in the leadership of the local church.

2. *For what purpose did Christ give these gifts to the church (v. 12)?*

Christ gives these gifts to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints to do the work of ministry (v. 12).

3. *According to this passage, who is it who does the work of ministry (v. 12)? How is this different from the way we often think about “ministry” in the church?*

According to this passage, it is the saints—all of them!—who do the work of ministry. This is different from the way we often think about “ministry” in the church because we tend to think that only the paid pastors do ministry, and we’re the ones they minister to. According to Paul, pastors equip *us* to do the work of ministry, which means that our work in the church is far more important than we often think it is.

4. *What’s the goal of the church’s growth (v. 13)? What does this teach us about how we should—or shouldn’t—evaluate our church?*

The goal of the church’s growth is that every member would attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (v. 13). This teaches us that we should evaluate our church in terms of how well we are helping others grow in their knowledge of Christ, unity in the truth, and Christian maturity. Yet too often we evaluate our church based on whether we like the music on Sunday morning, whether the service is entertaining, whether we feel like the church meets our needs, and many other things. Rather, we should ask how *we* are doing, and how others are doing, in building up the whole body to a mature knowledge of Christ.

5. *What threat to the church does Paul have in view in verse 14?*

The threat to the church which Paul has in view in verse 14 is false teaching.

6. *What does Paul say will happen once we all attain to mature manhood (v. 14)?*

Paul says that, once we become mature, we will be able to successfully withstand false teachers. We won’t be blown and tossed by winds of doctrine, and we won’t buy in to men’s deceitful schemes (v. 14).

7. *By what means does the church grow up to maturity (vv. 15–16)?*

The church grows up to maturity as every member speaks the truth to each other in love and as every single member of the body supplies what it is supposed to in order to help the body grow (vv. 15–16).

8. *What percentage of the body needs to contribute in order for it to grow properly (v. 16)?*

One hundred percent of the body is needed in order for the body of Christ to grow properly (v. 16). That doesn't mean everyone gets up and preaches from the pulpit on a Sunday morning, but it does mean we all contribute to each others' growth.

9. *What are some ways in which a biblical practice of church membership helps contribute to the kind of growth this passage describes?*

There are a number of possible answers, including:

It provides accountability which helps members to overcome sin and grow in holiness.

Members' commitment to each other will lay the foundation for the kind of mutual upbuilding this passage describes.

10. *How do you think your contribution to the church's growth would be affected if you weren't a member of the church you regularly attend?*

Christians will likely not have the same commitment to the church, accountability to the church, help from others, encouragement from others, and opportunities to minister to others if they do not join the church they attend.

11. *In light of this picture of every member of the body contributing to the body's growth:*

How would you describe the goal of church membership? The goal of church membership is that every member would help the whole body grow to maturity in Christ.

What are some concrete steps you can take to help your church grow to maturity in Christ?

The goal of church membership is that every single church member would help the whole church grow to maturity in Christ.