

UNITED: 12 Truths That Hold Us Together

Class One: Called Out and Gathered Together:

The Church and the Meaning of Membership: Jesus does not merely save scattered individuals. He calls His people to Himself and gathers them together as His church.

1. CHRIST HOLDS HIS CHURCH TOGETHER

- “In him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church.” — Colossians 1:17

2. GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN GATHERING A PEOPLE

The church does not suddenly appear in the New Testament. Throughout Scripture, God is gathering a people for Himself.

- Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Descendents of Seth → a people who worship God
- Abraham → “I will make of you a great nation”
- Israel → “my treasured possession... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”
- Jesus → “I will build my church”

Jesus did not come merely to rescue isolated individuals. **He came to gather the people of God.**

Christianity is intensely personal without ever being merely private.

Think about it: How does this challenge the way our culture tends to think about Christianity as simply “me and Jesus”?

3. JESUS CAME TO BUILD HIS CHURCH

Jesus calls the church His *ekklesia*—an assembly or gathering. The Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) uses this word for the gathered people of Israel.

The church matters because **the church matters to Jesus**. He purchased her with His blood, He is building her, and He is sanctifying her.

The church is:

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| • The body of Christ | • A holy nation |
| • The bride of Christ | • A royal priesthood |
| • The household/family of God | • A people for God's own possession |

4. WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

The New Testament does not give us a verse saying, “Fill out a membership form.” But it clearly envisions Christians belonging to identifiable congregations where they are **known, shepherded, and accountable**:

- **Acts 2-** Those who believed were “**added**” to the people of God.
- **1 Peter 5:2-** Elders are commanded to “**shepherd the flock of God that is among you.**”
- **Hebrews 13:17-** Leaders are “**keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.**”

The sheep belong to Christ, the Chief Shepherd, but He gathers them into flocks and gives under-shepherds responsibility for caring for them.

WHAT DOES MEMBERSHIP MEAN?

1. **United in Need:** Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save [except] in His sovereign mercy?
2. **United in Hope:** Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?
3. **United in Purpose:** Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?
4. **United in Service:** Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?
5. **United in Accountability:** Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

FOR REFLECTION

1. **Am I approaching church primarily as a consumer or as a participant?**
2. **Who is being helped because I belong to this church?**
3. **Where might Christ be calling me to serve, encourage, forgive, or bear with another believer?**
4. **Am I willing to be known, loved, encouraged, and even corrected by my brothers and sisters in Christ?**