

# WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

*16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

*- Ephesians 4:17*

Many local church organizations 'sell' church memberships as being accepted into the body of Christ. Their idea of church membership is often a person or family that is baptized in the church or entered the church by written testimony AND pays their tithes to be in good standing. We feel this is an unbiblical practice as no man or man-made organization has the authority to declare if a person is saved, forgiven, or in any other way a member of the Body of Christ. The authority is God's alone and frankly, we don't have a say in who is in and who is out. Our position then is that church membership is membership in the Global Body of Christ rather than a local congregation (often called a church) or local expression of that body. That said there are many benefits the Christian will experience as a member of the Body, primarily Peace with God. However, we also experience Love, Joy, Forgiveness, and Conviction/Correction from God. While we stress the importance of the Global Body of Christ, being a 'member' or active participant in a local congregation is vital to your faith. Participating in a local congregation promotes spiritual growth and gives the believer an opportunity to use the gifts the Lord has given him to promote the overall health of the body. Hebrews 10:25 warns us to *"not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* How can we be encouraged if we are not together? How can we serve and exhort others if we are not doing life with them? Just as the human body must have every part working effectively to be healthy, so it is with the Body of Christ. What is your function in the body? Are you effectively serving your purpose?

**- A parasite is an organism that lives on, or in, a host and gets its food from, or at the expense of, its host. Are there parasitic Christians? What are they?**

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the privileges of being a Christian? (*Why is 'eternal life' just the icing on the cake?*) Are there obligations to being a Christian? If so, what are they?
2. Being a part of the body of Christ implies you can be a part of another body (the body of the world). What body are you a member of? How are you attached to Christ? Are you at all attached through anything to the World? (i.e material things, the news, finances, relationships)
3. Just as the human body must have every part working effectively to be healthy, so it is with the Body of Christ. (The Church) Would you say your local Body is healthy? What could make it healthier?
4. What can you do to bring your church family closer together? What can you do to bring unbelievers into the family?
5. Pastor Steve mentioned that everything belongs to God. (Your time, talent, and treasure) What is the cost of being a member of The Church? What does, or should, your service cost you?