

Church Membership

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 August 2023

Preacher: Joe Sutton

[0 : 00] Father, I pray your blessing today as we bring in wisdom to your people. And so this is not a purely academic study.! It's not intended to be a find the answer from the answer book.

Lord, we want your spirit to move and bring us into wisdom today. And Lord, I know certainly I need you to bring me wisdom. But I pray, Lord, for those gathered here and those listening back, that you would bring wisdom and knowledge and understanding so we know how we should live in these days.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So we are going to take a week to consider the topic of church membership.

And the reason we're doing that is because, well, simply this. We are intending to implement a formal church membership here at the Upper Room.

And it may come as a surprise to you to know, when I say that I have never actually been a formal member of a church, ever. Even though I have been very much an active part of a church for a very long time, that church didn't have formal membership.

[1 : 12] It had informal membership. So sort of if you happen to come regularly, then you're probably a member. And that was basically it. And I'm not saying that's definitely wrong.

What I am saying is that both Ray and I have become convinced that here, the Lord would have us to implement something a little bit more clear, formal, established.

And so I thought since we had a week, I thought I would just share with you my thoughts on this and what the Lord has shown me as I've been studying it this week. You know, it's funny because Ray and I, I think it's true to say that we both independently arrived at the conclusion that this would be right for us.

And so anyway, so let's talk about it. So I'm not going with PowerPoint, but it might work. It also just completely might not work. How do I?

Ah, there we go. So that's a broad outline of what we want to talk about today. What is the church? When we say church, what do we mean? Obviously, we need that foundational understanding.

[2 : 20] Talk a little bit about the difference between the global and the local church, which is key and important. But talk a bit about the activities. What is it that the church is meant to be doing?

And then, well, okay, so why are we introducing church membership? And then finally, so what? Or, and every sermon should have a so what, right? So what? How, what does that mean for me?

How do I live differently? That's what we'll consider at the end. So, so first of all, what is the church? And it's a, obviously an English word.

And the history of the English word church is not at all clear, actually. But certainly, what is clear today is that it is a Christian word.

It refers to the Christian faith. Specifically, you don't talk about, you know, Jewish churches or Buddhist churches. They don't exist. But unfortunately, what it has primarily come to mean for the majority of people is the building, the church building.

- [3 : 25] Ooh, look at that lovely church. But really, this is a secondary meaning. It should be considered a secondary meaning. Because primarily, church is referring to the body of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by God's grace.
- That is to say, it is a group of Christians. And, so in the, I couldn't resist doing this.
- So in the, in the New Testament, which is written in Greek, you'll see this lovely word. Ekklesia. Ekklesia. And that is the word that is nearly always translated to church.
- And whenever you see the word church, it is that Greek word. So what? Well, the so what is that this is a word that is not a Christian word. It has no, has no Christian connotation whatsoever.
- Actually, the word refers to a, a gathering of citizens to, the call together to discuss either a political or social issue. Sometimes it'll be all of them.
- [4 : 32] Sometimes it will be a representative group. And so that's why when you read through the New Testament in Greek, which we all do, right? But you'll see when you get to Acts 19, that the assembly of, or the mob in Ephesus that was protesting Paul and what was happening at the Temple of Artemis is described as an ekklesia.
- Which is to say a group who've been called together to address this hot topic of the day. So it was a, it was an ekklesia of people. And what I also found somewhat provocative was, you know, we hear all, you hear a lot of conversation in the church about Israel and the church.
- And it amused me no end to discover that the Septuagint talks a lot about the ekklesia of Israel. I was like, you know, because it just means the assembly of God's people. That's what it means. So it's not especially a Christian word.
- It just means a group of people. But that's the key thing. People. Okay, fab. So let us now turn our attention to how that word is used. And whenever you're doing a word study in the Bible, one of the things that's really profitable is to say, well, where's the first place you see the word?
- Where is the first place that the word church, or in fact ekklesia, occurs in the New Testament Greek? And the answer is in Matthew chapter 16, which is on the screen.
- [5 : 59] Or you can turn to it. And it says this. So you may remember the context of this. This is Jesus Christ is responding to Peter's profession.
- Who do people say that I am? You are the Christ. And Jesus says, amazing. Blessed are you, Simon bar Jonah. It just means Simon, son of Jonah. Because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.
- And I also say to you that you are Peter. And upon this rock I will build my church. And the gates of Hades will not overpower it. The first occurrence of the word church in the New Testament.
- And we can observe this. Firstly, there is one church and it belongs to Jesus Christ. Jesus didn't say, I'm going to build my churches. He said, I'm going to build my church.
- So that's the first thing to observe. The second thing to observe is that it is built upon this rock. And there's two possibilities for what Jesus means by this rock.
- [7 : 06] It is possible that Jesus is referring to Peter. Peter as the foremost apostle. Or it could be a reference to the rock is what Peter has just said.
- This profession of faith. The faith that you have stated. The statement, you are the Christ, is the foundation of the church. And actually my view is that both of those perspectives are true.
- I'll show you another scripture from Ephesians 2. Which I found quite helpful. So this is where Paul now is speaking to the saints who are in Ephesus.

And where he also alludes to this idea of the church built on a foundation. So he says this. So then you are not strangers and foreigners. But you are citizens with the saints.

And are of God's household having been built on the foundation of the apostles. And prophets. Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. In whom the whole building being fitted together.

[8 : 12] Is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are being built together. Into a dwelling of God in the spirit. So you see again that concept of church built on foundation.

And the people of God are collectively referred to as a couple of things actually. They're referred to as God's household. God's household. Amazing. We're God's household. And actually we are.

We are his sons and daughters. By adoption. Which Ephesians also talks about. We are God's household. And then also we are. The church is referred to as a building.

Growing into a holy temple. But one that has its foundation on the apostles and the prophets. So who obviously Peter being one of those apostles. It is fair and right to say it's founded on Peter.

But actually I think we should understand that term more as follows. The apostles and the prophets. The apostles wrote the New Testament. The prophets wrote the Old Testament.

[9 : 18] It's a reference to how the scriptures. The Old and the New Testaments. Are foundational to the church. And the faith that they present.

Who is God? How does one relate to him? How does one be saved? Who is the Christ? So all these things are the faith that the Bible presents. And I hope that helps to explain why I think both.

The foundation of the church can be considered as both. Peter the apostle. The rock. Because he's an apostle. And also the faith that he professes. So anyway.

What I really wanted to get from that. Which I hope I haven't masked too much. Is that there is a single people of God. A household. A building. Founded on the word of God. And literally.

It is the ecclesia. Or the assembly. That the calling together. The group of people who are God's. The global church. With a capital C. But then of course.

[10 : 18] We have the church. Many times. In the plural. As well. And we'll see. Many places in the New Testament. In fact. I think more times.

You will see church. Referring to. Small. Local. Or large. But local fellowships. As in a. Local body of believers. As opposed to the whole church. Over the entire globe.

And so. Examples would be. Revelation 2 and 3. Is. Seven letters to what? Seven churches. Or.

You could look at. First. Corinthians 6. 19. Where. Paul is. Wrapping up his letter. And he says. The churches. Of Asia. Greet you. Aquila and Prisca.

Greet you harshly. In the Lord. With the church. That is in. Their house. So. Or you could read that another way. The assemblies. Of God's people in Asia. And the assembly that's in.

[11 : 14] Aquila and Prisca's house. So do you see. It's very clearly. A plural term as well. Referring to local. Fellowships. So. The church. Is. Global.

And the church. Is. Discreet. Self-contained. Fellowships. As well. Great. That's the church. So. What's the purpose of the church then?

Moving on. And. This could take a while. So I'm going to be. Somewhat brief. I think. If one wanted to stand here. And discuss.

All of the purposes of the church. That would take a little while. So let me instead. Just show you a few bits. That. The Lord showed me this week. So.

I've told you that the Bible. Presents the church. God's people. As a building. The Bible also presents. Uses another model. To present. The church.

[12 : 09] And that is that of a body. A body. With Christ. As the head. And a key. Chapter to read. On that. Would be. First Corinthians. Chapter 12. Which I considered reading.

But it's. Well. We'll take a few excerpts. As we go. But what Paul does. Is he develops. The image. And he shows how. If the body. If the church.

Is. A body. Then. The members of the church. Are sort of. Like the various parts of the body. Each of which has a different function. But they function together. To fulfill the purpose of the church.

Really. Really great image. I thought. One verse. Not on the screen. Is. First. Corinthians. 12. 27. So verse 27. Of that chapter. Says very simply this. Now.

You are Christ's. Body. And individually. Parts of it. So I think. At least. Part. Of the purpose of the church. Then. If we're going to say.

[13 : 04] What is the purpose of the church. At least part of it then. Is to live. As Christ's body. We are to be. As Christ's. Now. I will show you. Three things. To develop.

Develop that further. So. John 14. 12. Is this one. Jesus speaking. In John 14. 12. Said. Truly. Truly. I say to you. The one who believes in me.

The works that I do. He will do also. And greater works than these. He will do. Because I am going to the father. What's that? So.

Jesus is saying. That. As awesome and amazing. As the works that Jesus did. Were. The church. Is going to do. The same. And even greater. Works.

And I think. That's best understood. As. Greater in. Number. But Jesus simply says. Greater. Because. You know. Remember. Jesus was only. Ministering on earth.

[13 : 57] For three and a half years. Right. That was all he had. Whereas the church. Is ministered now. For. Two thousand years. So. But. What that shows us. Is Jesus expected.

His. People. His. Ecclesia. His. His church. To do the same works. As he did. As he did. And to continue his ministry. Uh. Similarly. Uh.

We read through Acts. Uh. Here at the fellowship. And that's how the book of Acts begins. Uh. Luke begins just like this. The first account I composed. Theophilus. About all that Jesus began to do and teach.

So. When. The. When Luke. Opened his second work. Acts. He. He says. There. That. His. First account. Namely the book of Luke. Is about what Jesus.

Began. To do and teach. And you think. Huh. It finished with Jesus ascending into heaven. That was the end of his ministry. Ah. No. Because Luke understood.

[14 : 55] That the ministry of Jesus Christ. Continues. Today. How? Well. First through the apostles. And then subsequently. Through. The church. Through the church.

The church is continuing. The ministry of Jesus Christ. And then one more. Is this one. From first. From second Corinthians. Five. Twenty. Where Paul says.

Therefore we are ambassadors. For Christ. As though God were making an appeal. Through us. We beg you. On behalf of Christ. Be reconciled.

To God. An ambassador. For the children. Who aren't here. Is someone. Who represents. Another country. For example. We know this. So.

The church. Then has the purpose. Of. Representing. Christ. To the world. Representing. Christ. To the world. Which is.

- [15 : 50] Somewhat hard. To ponder. When you think of. What the church. Has become. But. That is at least. What God. Intended. And that is what the apostles. Saw. As their. As their. Role. And Paul. Applies it here. To the ministry. Of reconciliation. Because Jesus. Came. To a lost world. To. To say.
- Basically. Repent. You know. Be reconciled. To God. That. If you wanted to. Summarize Jesus ministry. Down to one word. It would be. Repent. That's it. Return to God.
- And. And. As an interesting. Aside. One. One. Could think of the word. Christian. As meaning. Ambassador. For Christ. The word. Christian. Means. A follower.
- Of Christ. It means. Someone. Who was. Identified. With him. You know. In the same way. That the Herodians. Are. Identified. With Herod. And you know. All that. That's what. Ian means.
- [16 : 48] But we are. Christians. We are. Identified. With Christ. We are his ambassadors. We've chosen to. And we continue. To choose to. Be his follower. So one.
- Yes. One last. Thing. I wanted to say. On. Why the church. Then. And the purpose. Was. This one. So this is the. Great commission.
- At the end. Of the book of Matthew. So just. This is just. Shortly before. Jesus Christ. Ascends. Into heaven. Matthew 28. Verse 18. He says.
- And Jesus came up. And spoke to them. The apostles. Saying. All authoritatively. In heaven. And on earth. Has been given to me. Go therefore. And make disciples. Of all nations. Baptizing them.
- In the name of the father. And the son. And the holy spirit. Teaching them. To follow. All that I commanded you. And behold. I am with you. To the end. Of the age. So what did Jesus expect.
- [17 : 43] His people to do. That. This. So if you put. These things together. What is the purpose. Of the church. I think it is this.
- Oh look. That was kind of me. I even made a little thing. The purpose of the church is. To continue the ministry of Jesus Christ. That is. Following his example. Being obedient to what he has commanded.
- His people to do. That is part of the role. So to continue his ministry. Secondly. To represent him. On earth. So people should look to. Christians. And the church. And say.
- Ah. So that is. What. Christ is like. That is what God is like. That should happen. And then thirdly. To preach. The gospel. To teach. And build up one another. In the doctrine of Christ.
- Okay. Fine. So. But I think that applies really. At a global level. So. High level. What is the purpose of God's church. Over.
- [18 : 40] The entire globe. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. It is. What is it that.
- God would have of them. And as we. Ponder that. I was. Inclined to ask myself. This question. What does it. Mean. To live.
- As. A Christian. What does it mean. What does it mean to you. If I. If you wanted to think. How should a Christian live. And you might say. Well. It would mean.
- Praying. It would mean. Not. Swearing. And using bad language. It would mean. Being nice. It would mean.
- Believing the right things. Of course it would. It would mean. Believing the right things. About God. And Jesus. And sin. And judgment. And maybe it would mean. Working really hard. And diligently. But is it.

[19 : 37] Is it that. Is it just those. Sort of. Isolated. Individualistic. Aspects. Does that mean. Is that what. Paul had in mind. Is that what we see. When we read the epistles.

The letters. That are in the Bible. Written to Christians. Well. What I want to show you. Is that. The way that the Bible. Depicts. Life as a Christian.

Has many. Many things. Prescribed. For us. That can only be done. In the context. Of a local community. And I think. And in. In a church.

In a local church. There's an expectation. That we will. Live. Together. And we will. Serve. One another. And we will. Bring. Mutual benefit. To one another.

And we have. Mutual duties. Together. To do. Or. To put it. In another way. We relate. Together. In a way. Such that. Everybody. Is. Blessed. If we take.

[20 : 32] The phrase. One another. And then we say. Okay. Bible. Search for that. Phrase. In the New Testament. 62 results. You will find. And we're going to go through.

No we're not. But what I will show you. Is this slide. I thought. Well let's just look at. What happens in the book of Romans. You could just about read that right. Kind of. Maybe. I can. But I'm a meter away.

So. I'll send this out afterwards. So. If we say. What do we get. From the book of Romans. If we search for the phrase. One another. We will see all of these.

We are parts of one another. We are to be. Devoted to one another. In brotherly love. Giving preference to one another. In honour. We are to. Seek to be of the same mind. Towards one another.

We are to love one another. We are to not. Judge one another. To be building up one another. Same mind. Once again. To accept one another. And then. This one. Admonish one another.

[21 : 32] Admonish means. To correct. And warn. One another. So if we see someone. If we see someone going astray. If we see someone. Not living.

In a way that corresponds. With Jesus teaching. We are to admonish. That's what the word. Means. So in. In the community.

Of a local church. We are. Parts. Of one another. We are that. We can think of ourselves. As one body. Individually. Parts of one another. We read at the top there.

So. I hope that shows you. There are many. Many things. That the. Scriptures. Call us to do.

As God's people. That can only be done. Together. And I think that we can. And should expect. That these things are happening. In our church. In this church. We. I would like. We would like.

[22 : 26] We should expect. To see these kind of things. Happening. More and more. Hopefully. Lord willing. And he is willing. So we show love. To one another.

And that means. That we don't think. Lovely thoughts. It means that we are. Showing love. By doing things. And doing acts. Purely for the benefit. Of another.

It means we're seeking. To find common ground. And to agree. As much as possible. And it means that we are. Admonishing. We're seeking to. Lovingly support. And correct. But I think another aspect.

That came across for me. As I looked at this. Was. Was. That there's a call. To commitment. An effective community.

Requires. A level of mutual commitment. To one another. What does it mean. To be devoted to one another. In brotherly love. If it doesn't mean. To have. A sense of commitment.

[23 : 22] To be a part of that fellowship. And that community. So I think that there's a calling then. To find. A local fellowship. And to commit. To that fellowship.

Now I do want to zoom in. On one of the verses. That we've considered. Which I think. I have. So this is. Romans 12. Is a very useful passage. Actually. And again. If you're going to read two. Chapters.

To back this up. It would be. 1 Corinthians 12. And Romans 12. But Romans 12. Paul says. Be devoted to one another. In brotherly love. Give preference to one another.

In honour. Not lagging behind in diligence. Fervent in spirit. Serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope. Persevering in tribulation. Devoted to prayer. Contributing to the needs of the saints.

Practicing hospitality. And. If it's permissible to call it an obligation. Then. This is it. There's an obligation. To be.

[24 : 18] Contributing to one another's needs. To be practicing hospitality. And by the way. The saints. Is a reference to. God's people. It's a term that means.

Holy ones. Literally is what it means. It doesn't refer to. A select group of super holy ones. It means God's people who are saved. That is what it means. So it means.

Contributing to the needs of. The people in the church. So. In our commitment to one another.

In the context of a local fellowship. God intends us to. Care for one another. To pray. For one another. And I should say. Care. In a physical sense. And in a spiritual sense as well.

To watch out for one another. To hold one another accountable. If you're taking notes. Galatians 6.1. Is important for that. We can edify one another. Edify means. To build one another up.

[25 : 15] It means. To help them to grow. Romans 15.2. Is a key one for that. To bear with one another. To have patience. To pray for one another. And again. To admonish.

One another. And I was. As I was making this list. And I was thinking about this. I thought. Man. When was the last time. I sat down. Before the Lord. Just.

Purely to. To pray for. The Christians. That God has brought into my life. And to pray for that. And I thought. I'm not. I'm not good enough. Doing that. Because there. There is an obligation here.

I think. There's a. There's a duty. That we have. In our commitment. To one another. When did I last. Ask the Lord.

To help me. To be a blessing. Or to speak into their lives. Or to meet their needs. Hmm. I was challenged. Because I think sometimes.

[26 : 11] If the church. Has become. If a church. Has become more about. Doing the tasks. Than it has about. Fulfilling. And doing these things. We've gone pretty far off track. You know.

Because there are tasks to do. You know. We did have to. Put all these things up. And we do. There are things we have to do. And you know. Ray and I of course. Are working through. A whole bunch of practical things. Which we have to do.

To get the church established. But if. If. The day comes. When those things. Have become. More of a priority. Than. This stuff. That's. That's. We've gone wrong.

And hey. I need your admonishment. So. A general view. Of what all members of the church. Should be doing. I wanted to talk a little bit. About.

Roles. And offices though. Because I think this is important. When we're talking about the church. And I hope. I'm a little bit behind. Of where I want it to be. But anyway. The Bible does teach.

[27 : 05] And require. That local churches. Have clearly defined. Leadership in place. So for example. If you look in. This passage here. From the book of Titus. Paul writing to.

A gentleman. By the name of Titus. Said to him this. For this reason. I left you in Crete. What's that? So that you would set in order. What remains. And appoint elders. In every city.

As I directed you. And then. Goes on to. To give some criteria. But. Notice that. Paul. Gave. Titus. This specific.

Duty. And requirement. And this is what he called. Set in order. Set in order. What remains. What is that? It is to establish leadership. That is what the elders are. They are the.

The established. Spiritual leaders. And guides. In those fellowships. And Paul is saying. They need to be. Installed. And actually. If you know. If you step back from this.

[28 : 02] You actually have. I was going to say four. Four ranks. Isn't quite the white word. But if you look. You've got Paul. Giving instructions. To Titus. To install. Elders.

Who will have authority. Over the local church. So you have this. There is intended to be. Leadership structure. In place. And all of that leadership. Is of course. Subservient to.

Jesus Christ. Who is the head of the church. But see that. Leadership. In the local fellowship. Is not. Simply a biblical. Thing that we can do. It's actually. Required.

For a church. To be set. In order. And I think. It follows then. That local fellowships. Obedient to Christ. Will install. Clear leadership. Modelled on the principles.

Of scripture. And. Also. There are. Other. Roles. That the church. Should establish.

[28 : 54] Church. I think. I will just. Skip over this. A little bit. I encourage you. To read through. First Corinthians 12. And Romans 12. To see. It talks about. Spiritual gifts.

And what. What I would. Summarize this down to. Is it's. It's valuable. And useful. For us. To know. That. Again. Every member. Of a church. Is.

Uniquely. Capable. Uniquely. Gifted. By God's. Holy Spirit. Skilled. To do. Certain things. And. One of our. Joys. As Christians.

Is to find out. What are those things? What is God calling us to do? You could give a whole sermon on this. But. We could probably do a whole series on this. I'm not going to. Because it's already 20 to 12. And I'm going to skip down to.

Something that I didn't really want to get into too much. But. I think it is. Critical. And that is the subject of. Church discipline. because i can't i can't touch on this word admonish um and not talk about this a little bit because i think this and this is one of the reasons why you do really need formal membership because churches are called to discipline one another that's what the word admonish means correct and warn if going astray there are great positive things that the church does together really wonderful things that we do for the purposes of mutual growth and blessing but then you have admonishment oh that's the negative bit well it's not though is it because i don't think anybody here sitting in this room is thinking i'm pretty much perfect i don't need any more development or growth because and actually admonishment discipline um feedback is foundational it's so constructive and i think it's good for us to see it as corrective as formative as to make us better than we were before um familiar verse to many who memorize scripture all scripture is inspired by god and is beneficial for teaching for rebuke for correction and for training in righteousness ah so look if i if i have a role to stand here and to teach and preach the bible hey guess what well that should be beneficial to you guys for all of us for teaching rebuke correction and training in righteousness if we are accurately declaring to you the word of god then these things will happen uh hebrews 12 hey it's all about chapter 12 today hebrews 12 speaks about how god disciplines his children and um and and what he's saying paul is saying there in hebrews the writer to hebrews is saying is if god isn't disciplining you that you're not children you aren't you i think he says that you're illegitimate wow yeah what son is there whom his father does not discipline says the writer so how does this work i want to there's two more scriptures i want to show you on that the first one is matthew 18 15 to 17 so this is this is a this is a really fundamental one on how does admonishment work says this jesus speaking now if your brother sins go and show him his fault in private if he listens to you you have gained your brother but if he doesn't listen to you take one or two more with you so that on the testimony of two or three witnesses every matter may be confirmed and if he refuses to listen to them tell it to the church that is to say the local church you know we aren't telling the entire global church right tell it to the church and if he refuses to listen even to the church he is to be to you as a gentile and a tax collector which or to put that in other words he is to be considered outside the church not part of the church but there is a process to follow someone is in sin you deal with it as locally as you can hey i've noticed this i think we should talk about that because i don't think it's in step with what the scriptures teach i don't think it's in step with the profession of faith no you're wrong you're wrong you're wrong okay well then next step is to seek the prayers and the support of two or three to say no we agree we think this is wrong so you see there's a process to follow and this isn't for only the leadership of

[33 : 43] a fellowship to to do right this this is what admonishment one another looks like um the other one i wanted to show you is first corinthians five verses one to three and again we could read this whole chapter we will not we will read a couple of bits from it in first corinthians five this is paul as a leader in the church is rebuking a fellowship for failing to deal with sin he says it's actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you and sexual immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the gentiles i.e you guys are worse than those outside the church namely that someone has his someone has his father's wife and you have become so arrogant and have not mourned instead so that the one who has done this deed will be removed from your midst for i on my part though absent in the body but present in spirit have already judged him who has so committed this as if i were present wow so much for judge not right paul has judged so we have to we have to consider these things together um later in the chapter this i know it's small i'll read it to you uh paul says in the same chapter i wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people i did not at all mean with the sexually immoral people of this world or with the greedy or swindlers or with idolaters for then you'd have to leave the world but actually i wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is a sexually immoral person or a greedy person or an idolater or is verbally abusive or habitually drunk or a swindler not even to eat with such a person for what business of mine is it to judge outsiders do you not judge those who are within the church but those who are outside god judges remove the evil person from among yourselves okay so do you see what he's saying here he he if there is a case where you have somebody who professes to be a brother so-called brother right but who is known to be in sin and paul lists a whole bunch verbally abusive idolater greedy habitually drunk swindler don't even eat with that person wow but paul says actually but that is not to say that we shouldn't associate with those kind of people outside of the church because then we'd have to leave the world um says paul so what paul is saying is there is an expectation of standards of behavior of uh eschewing of sin in the church that if that is not happening the church should be admonishing one another um and again in this case it is a leader doing the admonishment sin this is what you should be doing you're pleased to know that's all i have to say about that so then okay but why membership then why what is this so what what i'm hoping i've done is to lay a foundation and a background as to help see why i'm convinced that formalizing local church membership is really essential in that passage in first corinthians 5 there is a clear delineation between those in the church and those who are outside and again he's not talking about the global church he's not talking paul isn't talking about kicking people out of the global church no no person has got the authority to do that that's between god and that person no human has that authority he's talking about exclusion from a local fellowship he's saying in and out how do you know who is in and who is out how do you know who

are the members of a fellowship so so we believe that god is starting a new fellowship right here and that means that we need to have leadership we need to have offices we need to have overseers and or elders there needs to be a lead pastor and critically there will be many other roles and duties and uh things that need to be done every member of the fellowship to perform and using you know according to the gifts and the abilities that god has granted um how's that going to happen without clarity on who has committed to the church um we look at this passage as well in hebrews 13 this is written to the leaders uh i beg pardon this is written about leaders to the church obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account so that they may do this with joy not groaning for that would be unhelpful to you and here two things happen i think one is that there's this commandment to the members of the church to obey the leadership god has installed but secondly there's this statement that the leaders are going to give an account for the souls in their care when immediately you think well hang on who are they who are the souls to whom i will give an account to god well i think that is the members how do we know who they are how do we know who is committed how do we know who has said yes i will do those one another's i will pray for the leadership i will give and serve and bless here and that is all that i mean that's all that we mean when we say we need to have um formal membership it is to say we need to have a way of formalizing that commitment formalizing what is expected what can what we can expect and what we can what we can expect and what we expect to do i still didn't put that very well did i hope you get the point it's it's about making it clear yes i'm a member yes i'm committed here these this is what i will do i will pray for this fellowship i will seek to bless the other members i will seek to be an active part of the fellowship i will commit to come here i will commit to give here i will commit and i will receive and i will receive the blessing of friendship and fellowship and being prayed for and being cared for to know that this is my home church these are my people these are the ones who are praying for me these are the people who know i'm struggling and they know how i'm struggling and they're praying into it these are the people and i know their struggles and i'm praying for them so what so what so what so what indeed this is the so what four things i landed on as a uh as conclusion points to this message today and the first one is simply this there is a call to be obedient to the gospel because the church because church is god's people church is a collection of people who are god's households who have received the free gift of salvation the gospel which declares that while we were sinners worthy of rejection by god he instead has chosen to save us through the sacrifice of jesus christ who died while we were unworthy and we remain unworthy in and of ourselves and yet we have confidence in the eternal life is a free gift received by believing in christ's death and resurrection believing these things and knowing these things that is how we become members of the church big capital c that is how we become members of the global church the community the assembly of god's people

we receive the holy spirit as assurance of salvation we receive the holy spirit as the one who empowers us to serve god and and to serve one another and and as paul said you know as an ambassador i appeal to you and i do urge um that we would make our salvation sure be reconciled to god because church membership is open exclusively to those who have made that clear profession of faith well secondly then um i would encourage us all to to pray for us as we consider how to implement membership because the bible says a bunch of stuff right we've looked at a bunch of stuff but it doesn't say and this is what church membership should look like and this is what your statement of faith should look like and this is uh this is your covenant statement or whatever other documents we need to have i don't know um how does one join how does one leave how does one uh there's a bunch of stuff that ray and i and and all of us are working through and i really earnestly seek your prayers and your wisdom as we do this please and also do pray for our um endeavors as we continue uh to look at joining the fiec fellowship of independent evangelical churches um which is already a great support to us so please please be doing that thirdly um i think there's a call to pray about our commitment um you know when when this started 21 christmas 21 something like that i don't know it was it starts for me and ali it started with ray coming over to our home and saying hey we're starting this thing um i'm starting a home bible study on sunday um don't know what the lord's going to do you're welcome to come or not come no pressure and at the time that was exactly what we needed exactly what we needed and to some extent that will always be true this is never going to be any this is never going to be an exclusive club that people are turned away from um but there is a call if if you there is a i guess there is a call to commit if the lord is leading us to do that and and certainly for me that is a calling that i've heard and he did um but for all of us need to consider that prayerfully is that what the lord is calling us to do and yeah and we pray that this church will become established you know we haven't done our website yet we haven't uh got all of our health and safety things done yet and we're working on it and the day will come when we are officially open for the public so to speak um anyway i encourage you to pray into that and then finally um consider your role in the body of christ and your role in this fellowship as well how has god gifted and equipped you what role does god seem to have made you to fulfill uh when you read if you read uh first corinthians 12 then you'll you'll come across a verse that says earnestly desire the greater gifts so there is a sense in which we should be seeking and praying for um i guess seeking and praying for the best gifts the greatest gifts as in what is it that the lord is calling me to do those are the greatest gifts to do the thing that god is calling and equipped us to do that is the greatest joy that there is in life i'm convinced of that to know that you are doing the lord's will and so i want to encourage you to to pray into that and think on that there will be no shortage of things to do in this fellowship and not just the visible things either so pray into it and as we do that may the lord bless us richly

thank you lord for these things lord i thank you for your words and uh well sometimes i feel like my life would be a lot easier if you had been like super clear on how churches should be structured lord we give you glory and praise because you have given us enough to know how to biblically establish a church lord and clearly your priorities are the spiritual ones they are how are we spiritually relating to one another how are we loving and serving one another how are we building each other up and i pray lord god for our fellowship that we would be and we would be increasingly a body of people who love you and love one another that greatest commandment that we read in matthew 22 lord we want to be that and i pray that you would help us to be that and i pray that you would help us as we seek to establish this church lord lead us we confess and agree that lord jesus christ you are the head of the church and we are your body and so we pray that you would have your rightful rightful place i pray that the practical needs of the church would never take preeminence over the spiritual and i pray lord in all things you would be glorified in jesus name amen you