



The Courageous Church Member!

May 29, 2022

Holy Text: Acts 2:40-47

Do you remember our definition of a local church?

The (local) Church is a group of born-again, Spirit-filled, baptized believers in Jesus Christ who gather on the Lord's Day for biblical worship and who are committed to obeying Scripture and personal holiness. It is led by specific elders and deacons and, collectively, is passionate about covenant love one to another, advancing the Gospel, making disciples, and being a light in the midst of the culture.

All Biblical churches are headed by Jesus Christ (Col 1:18) and governed by His Word (2 Tim 3:16). The church is what Christ is building! (Matt 16:18)

After His ascension, Christ sent His Spirit and established the local church. Every believer should be a "member in good standing" of a local body of believers.

A few observations about "church membership:"

- Local Church membership is often disputed today.
- Local Church membership is thought to be unnecessary today.
- Local Church membership, in our view is both biblical and necessary! In the NT, it is **implied** and **assumed**. How?

1. Because NT instructions were first local, then to the broader Body.

Romans 1:1 (KJV) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 1:7 (KJV) To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:1-2 (KJV) Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, **2** Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

2. Because overseers/elders/pastors are charged with a local flock.

Acts 20:17-18 (KJV) And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. **18** And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

Acts 20:27-31 (KJV) For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. **28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **29** For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. **30** Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. **31** Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Titus 1:5 (KJV) For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

James 5:14 (KJV) Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

3. Because LORD's Day gatherings are in a local context.

Acts 2:1 (KJV) And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 20:7 (KJV) And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

1 Corinthians 11:17-20 (KJV) Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. **18** For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. **19** For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. **20** When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

4. Because church discipline is local.

Matthew 18:15-17 (KJV) Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. **16** But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. **17** And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 (KJV) It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. **2** And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13 (KJV) I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: **10** Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. **11** But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. **12** For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? **13** But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

2 Thessalonians 3:6 (KJV) Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

5. Because gifts and care are first expressed in a local "Body."

1 Corinthians 12:4 (KJV) *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.*

1 Corinthians 12:7 (KJV) *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

1 Corinthians 12:12 (KJV) *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

1 Corinthians 12:21 (KJV) *And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.*

1 Corinthians 12:25-26 (KJV) *That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*

Galatians 6:10 (KJV) *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

- Local Church membership is attacked by Satan and his angels; they know its benefits!
- Local Church membership takes courage; it takes determination and fortitude to be faithful to a local church!

Thoughts on this Text:

1. Acts 2 happens on the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost means “fiftieth.” It refers to the Old Testament feast of Weeks (Ex 34:22-23) which was celebrated 50 days after Passover.
2. It was also a day to celebrate the harvest...

Leviticus 23:21-22 (KJV) *And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. 22 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.*

3. The LORD did in fact send a harvest on this day in Acts 2, just a different kind!
4. Filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4), Peter stood up and preached to the crowd that had gathered around. Why did the crowd gather? Because of the noise of worship and celebration! (2:6)
5. Beginning with a prophecy by Joel, Peter preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen from the dead! He declared Him to be both LORD and Christ! (2:36)
6. The reaction to his message was wonderful...

Acts 2:37-38 (KJV) *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

7. This is astonishing, since Peter's preaching wasn't "winsome" or filled with cultural caveats! Luke summarizes Peter's sermon like this: *"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."* (v40)
8. A harvest of 3000 souls were baptized and "added" to them! Added to who? To the local church in Jerusalem! (v41)
9. Then, this newly established local church did ten things. They...
 - Studied and heard preaching together (v42)
 - Fellowshiped and prayed together (v42)
 - Feared God together (v43)
 - Experienced God's power together (v43)
 - Believed together (v44)
 - Shared together (v44-45)
 - Gathered often together (v46)
 - Ate joyfully together (v46)
 - Worshipped God together (v47)
 - Experienced growth together! (v47)
10. Other than the power of the Holy Spirit, what is the common thread? **TOGETHERNESS!** Beloved, these are among the manifest blessings of **Courageous Church Membership!**

Ten Attributes of a Courageous Church Member! He or she:

- 1. Understands and is not ashamed of the local church.**
 - The LORD has always gathered His people. He has always "called them out."
 - No one who truly understands why Christ died takes His house for granted. He or she knows the gates of hell will fight against it.
 - Sadly, we live in an age where even "church people" say things like "you still going to that church?"
 - Beloved, the local church was Christ's idea and Sunday is still the LORD's Day!
- 2. Is committed to the local church.**
 - Jesus gave His life to save His people and establish His church! Courageous Members get this. They are committed to follow the LORD's example.
 - In the NT, a believer was a "member" by location. Today, with the growth of the Kingdom, membership is by decision. This has strengths and weakness. For example, a strength: we can choose sound churches. A weakness? We can leave sound churches for less than biblical reasons.
 - Your church will have flaws. All do. No local church is perfect, but neither are its members!
 - Although it is very easy in 2022 to "come and go," be brave. Be committed. Be "all in." Beware of holding your church responsible for things NOT in the New Testament! Do not let your preferences become "personal precepts" and rise above the Bible!
- 3. Prays with and for the local church.**
 - The most neglected local church meeting is often the prayer meeting! This should not be!

Acts 4:31 (KJV) *And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.*

***Ephesians 6:18 (KJV)** Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

4. Faithfully attends the local church.

- Many are too comfortable missing church. Why is this? Be courageous. Build life around the worship of God!

***Hebrews 10:24-25 (KJV)** And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

5. Is accountable/submitted to the local church.

- God commands His people to walk in obedience and submission to their elders/pastors. This is unpopular, but is meant to be a blessing to your soul!

***Hebrews 13:17 (KJV)** Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*

6. Builds life around the local church.

- Recall our primary text! They lived life together! Daily prayers and study and fellowship and breaking bread house to house!
- Culturally, we are so independent and isolated (and Covid hasn't helped!) that this sort of hospitality and sharing is not only foreign to most of us, but has become off-putting as well!
- Sadly, we still "build life" around other things: jobs, schools, sports, or entertainment.

7. Builds up the local church through their encouraging words and discipleship.

- As courageous members of local churches share the Gospel and make disciples (Matt 28:18-20), they eventually bring new converts into the life of the church.
- This is "natural:" the newly born need a support system!
- If church members mock or speak and think ill of their local church, where do they take those they have won to Jesus? This would be terribly unwise...

***Colossians 4:5-6 (KJV)** Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. **6** Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*

***Ephesians 4:29 (KJV)** Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

8. Serves the local church.

- Why don't more people dedicate a bit of time to serve their church? The whole body is hindered because of this. Your gifts are needed!

***1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (KJV)** Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. **5** And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. **6** And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. **7** But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

9. Gives to the local church.

- Other than providing for your household, is there a better investment than the Kingdom of God?

1 Corinthians 16:2 (KJV) Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (Also 1 Cor 9:11-14; 1 Tim 5:17-18)

10. Brings up their children in the local church.

- Parents, be your guides for joy! Squeeze every bit of wonder and awe out of the means of grace! Help your children see the majesty of Christ and His Kingdom! Help them love preaching, prayer, fellowship, ordinance, and singing!

Final Thoughts: The Beauty of the Church

Paul, towards the end of his ministry, wrote these words to Timothy:

2 Timothy 1:13 (KJV) Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

This “form” or “pattern” is beautiful. Consider again:

1. The Beauty of Honoring the LORD’s Day
2. The Beauty of Word-driven prayer and Scripture-regulated worship and preaching
3. The Beauty of seeing God’s Word as Sufficient for life and ministry
4. The Beauty of walking through Scripture to behold the purity and Love of the LORD
5. The Beauty of worshipping with and discipling our children
6. The Beauty of reaching out to others with the Whole Gospel
7. The Beauty of serving one another and the community
8. The Beauty of becoming a true family, enjoying times of fellowship and hospitality and love
9. The Beauty of biblical marriage and singleness, manhood and womanhood
10. The Beauty of being accountable to a small group of saved sinners
11. The Beauty of forgiveness and mercy and walking with each other through difficulties
12. The Beauty of using resources for His Glory

May you all be **Courageous Local Church Members**, and train up your children to be the same, unto the glory of God in Christ!

Amen.

For more study:

[The Authority of the Church](#)

[The 11 Duties of a Healthy Church](#)

[The Leadership of the Church](#)

[10 Reasons you Need the Local Church](#)