



I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

“A Functioning Church Member ”

1 Corinthians 12:12-27; -13

February, 2 2014

- ✓ **Membership Means We Are All Necessary Parts of the Whole – We Are One Body** Vs 13-14
- ✓ **Membership Means That Each Member is Equally Important**
- ✓ **Membership Means We Understand That God Places Us in the Body as He Chooses** Vs 18
- ✓ **Membership Means We Are Different But We Still Work Together** Vs 19-21
- ✓ **Membership Means that We Are not Independent but Interdependent** Vs 22-27
- ✓ **Membership Means Everything We Say and Do Is Based on a Biblical Foundation of Love** 1 Cor. 13

Questions Not To Ask:

What Has My Church Done For Me Lately?

Should I Be Serving My Church?

Who Has Served or Met My Needs?

Who Talked to Me or Helped Me?

Questions to Ask:

What Kind of Church Member Am I?

Who Have I Served and Helped?

Who Have I Welcomed Into Our Church?

Where Am I Serving?

THE FIRST PLEDGE

I like the metaphor of membership. It's not membership as in a civic organization or a country club. It's the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12:27 *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.”*

Because I am a member of the body of Christ, I must be a functioning member, whether I am an “eye”, an “ear”, or a “hand”. As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I will remember that *“if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”* 1 Corinthians 12:26

Our Response:

1. Do you understand how much God values your life and desires to have that personal relationship with you? You can ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life and save you right now. Remember it is as simple as **ABC!** **Admit** to God you are a sinner, **Ask** for His forgiveness, **Believe** Jesus is God's Son, **Confess** Him as Savior & **Commit** Your Life to Him as Lord (the Boss).
2. Maybe you have made that decision, but never have made it public. He is calling you to step out and take that next step that He asks us to do. Be baptized.
3. In order for you to grow and be all that the Lord is calling you to be, you need to be plugged in to a church. If you do not have a church home, and God has called you to be a part of **Petal FBC**, then step across the line today and join! We need you and you need us
4. Do you consider yourself a functioning Church Member? If not, why? If so why do you feel that way?
5. Can you name a way this past year where you had be dependent upon the body of Christ or you were able to help someone else? What did that mean to you?

I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

“A Functioning Church Member”

I Corinthians 12:12-27; 13

February 2, 2014 AM Service

Christianity as a whole is on a decline in our nation, and as a result so is Church Membership, even in our own Southern Baptist Convention. There are lots of reasons for that, but I believe with others that one of those is that gross misunderstanding of what it means to be a Church Member. It sounds rather basic and elementary, but maybe that's not the case, or perhaps it has become cloudy and blurred by our culture.

In a recent study, 9 out of 10 Churches are declining or growing at a pace that is slower than that of their communities. That had been the case here until recent years.

Generationally we can see it is very true. For the Builder Generation, those born before 1946, two-thirds of them identify themselves as Christians. You take the largest generation in America's history, even bigger than the Baby Boomers at almost 80 million, the Millennials they are called, those born between 1980 – 2000, only 15% identify themselves as Christians. We have all but lost an entire generation and what is to come of this next generation on the horizon?

There are lots of things we can blame it on (our culture, godless politics and moral decline, hypocritical church members, uncaring pastors, and on we could go) I would challenge us to take a deep look into the mirror this morning, and realize that much of the decline is because we have lost a true focus and sight of what the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ.

So let me so clearly this morning Church Family, Membership matters – we have no doubt lost the importance of biblical membership in our Churches today so one of our desired results as we walk away from this series is a deep renewed sense of what it means to be a member of the Church and specifically Petal First Baptist Church. (That's what our LifeGroups going through Starting Point is designed to do – so if you are not in one, please let me urge you to get in one today!) The 2nd desired result would be that as our church members become healthier, so will in our

church. And the healthier our church gets, the more impact it can have in our community and to the ends of the earth!

So we start this morning by asking what is a functioning member (meaning one who fulfills the God-given role that they were placed there for found in God's Word) supposed to look like? How do they support the Church? What do they do for the Church? What does the Church do for them? How do I know where my place is in the Church?

Let's look at [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#) to start answering some of these questions. We'll also look at [1 Corinthians 13](#) a little later so keep those Bibles handy!

Paul uses an incredible helpful analogy here in [1 Corinthians 12](#) to help us understand what it means to be a part of the Church, a member of the body of Christ and he uses our human bodies as an incredibly helpful example. And it's here where we begin our journey of what it means to be a member of the body of Christ, of His bride the Church.

There is a huge Difference in membership in a country club or organization versus being a member of the body of Christ and when we say body of Christ we are talking about the church, and in our case, even more specific – Petal FBC. **Explain ILLUS**

I joined one – Fairwood Country Club when I was single to play golf (and still had money) as a junior member they called it, those under 30, wasn't too expensive but I became a member. Membership had its privileges right. Got to use the pool, paid only to use a cart, not the green fee, could use the facilities there for a reception, etc., people know you are name, they are there to serve you if you will, take care of getting your clubs, cleaning them off when you are done, I could take it easy while they took care of the details.

Too often we can find ourselves in that same mentality about church membership. Statements I have heard at other churches through the years... This is my church, so you will do this. I give to this Church so you will play the music I want, I have been a member for 30 years I have earned a right to get what I want, You better not let that person in this church much less baptize them or else... We see clearly that God lays out that being a member of a Church is crucial, vital and absolutely necessary for a Follower of Christ to grow and mature. We look at 6 different ways

this happens over the next 4 Sundays. This morning we want to talk about what it means to be a functioning Church Member. What does it look like? We'll talk about a functioning Church Member who understands the truths found here in [1 Corinthians 12](#)... Let's take a look

✓ **Membership Means We Are All Necessary Parts of the Whole – We Are One Body** [Vs 13-14](#)

Some reject the notion of membership all together or say this word is too secular yet what we find in Scripture is the exact opposite. The world has stolen this word and made it something that it is not, or not at least in the context of the Church. Here Paul clearly lays out that membership is Biblical. He does so by showing that just as in the human body, it is one body, but yet as many different parts, each one is necessary for the body to function properly. And it also means that every part is necessary, but yet each is a part of the whole. Every part is necessary in the Body no matter their role or function, each is critical and vital. So you need to clearly need to understand this morning that you are part of the body of Christ, the Church and you are necessary this morning.

✓ **Membership Means That Each Member is Equally Important** [Vs 15-17](#)

This is always a great struggle in the body and one that can cause great problems in the church. We often think that some members are more important than others ones because there are some that are more out front, more public, more recognized than others. Yet we find this isn't Biblical at all. It makes sense to our flesh because all of us love to be recognized for what we do and contribute – it's natural – yet our call in the body is to serve and function in the role God has placed us in for His glory and the building up of the body. Sometimes we have a pity party because we don't have this role or that job or that responsibility or title and yet the Lord clearly says that each is vitally important and necessary and none more than any other.

✓ **Membership Means We Understand That God Places Us in the Body as He Chooses** [Vs 18](#)

This is a huge for all of us to understand and one that needs to be underlined, circled and highlighted. God places people in the Church as He desires, not as we desire, see fit, like, what fits our tastes or preferences. One of the reasons many churches struggle is because of the idea that I leave one church and go to another when I don't like something, when I disagreed, didn't get my way. Let me be clear this morning and one that I always ask people when they come to join – do you know that God has called you here, and that He is through using you in your church where you are a member now. It's why I don't visit those who come from another church, I believe the Lord needs to call you here and that you are not leaving or running away from where you are. This is vital.

Now for our Church specifically, God is bringing the people here necessary to accomplish His will in our Church. And because He is the creator of our bodies and how we are each uniquely gifted then He knows exactly where we need to be and where we need to serve the body. The problem comes when we try to go outside God's perfect plan and decide I want to be here or there. We need to leave that up to the Lord and trust Him that He knows what is best for us and the body.

✓ **Membership Means We Are Different But We Still Work Together**
Vs 19-21

This is one of the great things about a Church and one that a functioning member understands completely and embraces. The Lord has made us all different and unique which brings spice and flavor to our lives and to the Church. We are all ears, eyes, feet, mouths, and so on – each having a distinct and important role but since we are all part of the body we are called to work together in unity. (We'll talk more about unity next week) The Lord does call us or expect us to all be the same, act the same, like all the same things, never His intention. He made us all unique and different so we could fulfill all the roles in the Church. Now this creates great challenge because we are all so different and where we have to rely on the Lord to work in us and through us to have unity so that we can work together as the body of Christ and accomplish the calling that He has placed on this Church Family.

✓ **Membership Means that We Are not Independent but Interdependent** [Vs 22-27](#)

We live in a world that prides itself on independence, on not needing somebody else in our lives, to depend upon no one but yourself. That is where the idea has snuck into the church and we hear people say we'll I love God but I don't go to church, I don't need the church or the church doesn't need me. And yet when we find a Scripture and others throughout God's Word we find that this absolutely contradicts Scripture in every way! We are called to depend upon each other. Now certainly there is a sense where we have to be independent in certain ways, but there is also a clear call that just as we depend on the Lord we will depend on the body of Christ. Not always easy for us independent people to do – I am trying to do that right now as our Church Family loves on us and we are dependent upon you and we are grateful for you. Providing meals, praying for us, offering to help us in anyway possible. We don't want to put anyone out, inconvenience someone else, owe somebody, but yet when we do this we rob others from playing the God-given role that they have. And also be reminded to that what happens to one affects the others in the body. If sorrow, then we mourn with them, if joy then we rejoice with them. We deeply care for each other and allow it to affect our lives – we must not be unaffected! You often heard it said that we are not better than our weakest link – every link is vital in our Church Family!! The body will not function right – ILLUS: Extended Session in churches – volunteer doesn't show up and doesn't find anyone to replace them – creates a tailspin!

✓ **Membership Means Everything We Say and Do Is Based on a Biblical Foundation of Love** – [1 Corinthians 13](#)

This passage is so often used in weddings and that is certainly appropriate, however that is not the context of the Scripture here – it's in the context of a letter that was written to the Corinthian Church and her members and found in the preceding chapters talking specifically to the Church and also in Chapter 14. This is what the body of Christ should be like. So let's read this and take an evaluation of your life and does our Church look like this and are you contributing to this kind of love happening in our Church. Does this chapter describe our Church?

And by the way, we are called to love the lovable and unlovable or those that are harder to love – and let me remind us all – we are all probably hard to love for someone!!

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I'm going to ask you to take a Pledge Each Week as we discover each week what it means that I Am A Church Member – you can also sign the covenant at the end of Starting Point that we are going through in LifeGroups.

THE FIRST PLEDGE

I like the metaphor of membership. It's not membership as in a civic organization or a country club. It's the kind of membership given to us in 1 Corinthians 12:27 *“Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it.”* Because I am a member of the body of Christ, I must be a functioning member, whether I am an “eye”, an “ear”, or a “hand”. As a functioning member, I will give. I will serve. I will minister. I will evangelize. I will study. I will seek to be a blessing to others. I will remember that *“if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”* I Corinthians 12:26