

9/13/20 - Acts 2:42-47 - "Meaningful Members of Christ's Body"

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Preacher: Brenton Beck

- [0 : 0 0] I want to read a little excerpt out of a book. It's a small little book that I'm actually, the sermon today is derived from a couple different talking points within these two books.
- What is a healthy church and nine marks of a healthy church. And so this little book has a little sort of funny but sad story at the beginning. I'm going to have these available for free.
- If you do, if something sticks out in the sermon today, I'm going to have them out on the resource table. Go ahead and take either one, and both are excellent. And if you don't have one, maybe just order it from Amazon. It'll be here in probably two days, two or three days.
- But consider this story. That seems all too real. This is a story between a dialogue between nose and hand.
- Okay, nose and hand. Nose and hand were sitting in the church pew talking. The morning service led by ear and mouth just ended.
- [1 : 0 1] After the service, hand was telling nose that he and his family had decided to look for a different church. Really? Nose responded to hand's news. Why?
- He asked. Oh, I don't know. Hand said looking down. He was usually slower to speak than other members of the church body.
- But I guess, he continued, I guess because the church doesn't have what Mrs. Hand and I are looking for. Well, what are you looking for in a church?
- Nose asked. The tone in which he spoke these words wore sympathetic. Hand had to think before he answered. He and Mrs. Hand liked the pastor mouth and his family and minister of music ear meant well.
- Well, I guess we're looking for a place where people are more like us. Hand finally stammered. We tried spending time with the legs, but we didn't connect with them.
- [2 : 0 6] Next, we joined the small group for all the toes, but they kept talking about socks and shoes, which didn't interest us much. Nose looked at him, this time, with genuine dismay.
- Aren't you glad that they're interested in socks and shoes? Sure, but it's not for us. Then we attended the Sunday school for all you facial features, but everyone just wanted to talk and listen and smell and taste.
- It felt like, well, it felt like you never wanted to get to work and get your hands dirty. Anyway, Mrs. Hand and I were thinking about checking out that new church over on the east side.
- We hear they do a lot of clapping and hand raising, which is closer to what we need right now. Hmm. Nose replied, I see what you mean. In the end, it was hard for the hands to put their fingers on it, but they finally decided that that church wasn't for them.
- Nose thanked the hands for taking the time to talk and continued to express sadness for their departure, and so they left. Who needed the hands anyway?

[3 : 21] Apparently, the hands didn't need them. This type of story often exists all too commonly in our culture today, in our modern church culture.

It is a sad state of which the church, in our Western culture, I believe, has turned and capitalized upon this individualism in our lives.

That commitment to the church, as spoke about in the Bible, remember that word, that Greek word *koinonia*, that participation, the same participation that's mentioned and reflected in marriage, it's also reflected in church participation.

That that commitment and attitude looks nothing like a husband and a wife standing at an altar, making that vow and commitment to each other. Till death do us part, in sickness or in health, vows.

The church becomes a dulled matter of sort of personal convenience and preference, rather than that of commitment. Now, however, this is not just a problem in church.

[4 : 32] This is actually a situation at large in the culture. Like I said, we currently live in a day of sort of fearing commitment that we don't want to settle in. We sort of want to, it's kind of like wise in our minds to keep our options open, not to be all in in different realms and different organizations.

You just want to like stand out, you know, kind of be involved, but, but, you know, keep it at arm's length just in case. But regardless of what our culture is doing, the church must be reminded that our call is actually to be working against that grain of individualism.

The world shouts individualism. Things like write your own story. Things, sayings like forget organized religion. Things about finding yourself.

This is all deep centered individualism. You can often go to Barnes and Noble and with good intentions, go to the Christian life section and you see nothing about this corporate endeavor of the fellowship of believers.

It's all about how to be a better, be a better prayer warrior or how to do this better or 10 steps for this. It's all focused on individualistic theology.

[5 : 47] It doesn't take long to walk into Barnes and Noble and see that on the bookshelf of this self-centered means of discipleship where the local church isn't even mentioned. I was actually talking to a brother in the Lord, a good friend of mine who has been a friend for a long time and he's actually writing a discipleship curriculum and I told him, I'm like, I think the vital element that you're missing, like you have these disciplines, you have this act of participation, you have praying, you have all these things, but what you're missing is the local church because this is a vital means, according to scripture, of our spiritual well-being, of discipleship.

And it's funny because he's like, I already thought about that. So what I did was I actually, he ingrained that church membership and things like that, those words that we often hear about today is actually ingrained and entwined within the whole curriculum because he understood it as being vital as well.

Now the Bible doesn't celebrate individualism. Instead, the Bible paints the Christian life being rooted in a one another dynamic. Okay? The dynamic is expressed through a commitment within the local church congregation and that commitment is expressed in a word that we know in our modern church as church membership.

And that is a way of expressing that commitment. This biblical concept of church membership is more important than many of us may even today comprehend.

But it is God's intended means of bringing glory to himself. And it's a vital means of Christian discipleship. Now again, church membership, you can scour these pages, look at the Greek, look at the Hebrew, you will not find church membership as a term in the Bible.

- [7 : 43] However, it is a modern term used to express the biblical culture of that early church, meaning their commitment. But if you try to find that word, you will not find it in the Bible.
- However, you'll see instances just like Titus 3 of there was an established organization that was committed, that existed in order to call people out who didn't belong and send them on their way.
- And so, with the help of our trusty resources here, I'm gonna be pulling out a couple different things out of it. And we're gonna recall what has often been undervalued for quite some time since the early church up until about only three centuries ago, especially today in our individualistic society that we live in.
- Today, I would like to understand that, I would like us to understand that the Lord Jesus tells us as Christians we are to take up our cross and to follow him. There's a call to Christ and being a Christian to take up your cross and follow him.
- And while we live in a culture which likes to keep our options open, that reality of taking up your cross and following Jesus is nothing more than option closing. There's not really many options when you follow Jesus.
- [9 : 02] And he desires it in a specific way. And this delegitimizes your preferences, your fear of commitment, or anything else that could intrude upon that commitment to one another.
- And we will be looking at a few building blocks of church membership. And time's not gonna allow me to go into too exhaustive detail. I mean, unless you wanna cancel your Bob Evans lunch today.
- But time's not gonna allow me to go very in depth as far as like exegeting texts and saying like, I'm not trying to necessarily prove this because it's ingrained in so many parts of the Bible.
- But what I want to do, what I hope to do, is to be helpful to point us toward obedience to scripture as we observe two important questions that we see.
- And those questions today are what is the church? And then five reasons to join a church. And our church membership class is actually structured in a way that it's very low key.
- [10 : 02] It's actually for informational purposes. Just attending the church membership class doesn't mean that you're automatically in. There's actually a process of speaking with elders and things like that.
- But there's actually a discussion in that membership class to examine those biblical accounts of church membership. And again, I believe when you observe scripture, there is great evidence of being able to capitalize and see that single assembly assembly of commitments that was practiced consistently in the early church.
- And today, we just call it church membership. So for more information, the class is actually going to be available October 4th and October 18th. That's going to be our next church membership class that will be taking place, October 4th and October 18th.
- But what I'd like to look at today is what is the church? And we're going to be looking at different instances of dynamics of the church and I believe that this will be helpful with us in understanding our convictions of why we do what we do.
- Especially if somebody asks us why we do what we do. So first question, what is the church? I want to answer that for you today. Some may say that the church today looks really nothing like the churches of the early church.
- [11 : 21] And I would agree with you. A lot of the early churches within the first 300 years of the church in existence and Christ being on the cross and ascending, they met in homes.
- They did. It wasn't until 300 years that they actually got their first building and they started meeting regularly in buildings as the culture sort of adapted to Christian values.

But the early church did meet in homes because it was for good reason, because they were highly and heavily persecuted. It had nothing to do with preference. It had everything to do with persecution.

However, in asking what the church is, we become so idolized of our buildings anyhow, right? You think of church and you think of big steeples. You think of activities.

You think of the tents outside. You think of, you definitely don't think of often enough of people who gather within the church. You think of buzzwords.

[12 : 19] You think of logos. You know, things that might attract people, that is being the church. But I believe that we've forgotten that the church is defined by its people.

And I want that to be ingrained within our convictions of this church. This is observed in the New Testament Acts, the book of Acts. You see it in Peter's writings in the New Testament.

You see it in Paul's letters. That this is constantly, whenever you see church mentioned, this word means ecclesia, which also means assembly of people.

And the church is defined in two different realms, the local church and the universal church. In thinking critically about like the universal church, this is understood as like the church worldwide. This is all believers worldwide and it's not to be confused with the local church.

Two are important and two are expressed in different expressions. So all nations, all tribes, and all tongues, universal church. However, the local church, the assembly observed in the New Testament, that of which was the fellowship of believers in Acts 2, 42 to 47, what we saw in Titus 3 and what you see in Timothy, what you see in Acts, the local church is an assembly observed in the New Testament.

[13 : 37] It's a micro assembly of that macro assembly. It's a small snapshot of that universal church at large where all tribes, all tongues will be united with Christ.

Is it defined by that Greek word ecclesia? And the assembly of people is not just for anyone either. This specific ecclesia assembly is for believers.

And we see that in Acts 2, verse 42 through 47. Regardless of physical descent or maybe family heritage or family customs, that actually was normal leading up to the 1700s, up to the Protestant Reformation.

And then it started shifting back to the biblical early church convictions of regenerate Christian churches and membership. This local assembly is a significant means of sanctification for believers to grow in holiness.

I want you to understand that today. The local assembly, the local church is the significant means of sanctification in believers' lives and growing in holiness.

[14 : 47] Last week, we studied and observed church discipline in Titus 3. And I can't see, I can't, I, and can't we see, like in Titus, Titus had a role of addressing these churches in Crete to put what remained into order.

And this addressing was not just to any assembly. He wasn't just going to the marketplace. He was going to these local churches, these local assemblies to put what remained into order. It's also equally important to note that this local collection of believers is one that you can be excluded from, as we see in Titus 3, as we see in Matthew 18 with the hallmark church discipline passage.

which helps us to understand if it's something that you can be excluded from, it's something that brings inclusion, that there is a boundary line that to be excluded from.

You understand that? Devers says in his book, the church is not a place, not a building, not a preaching point, not a spiritual service provider, it's a people.

The new covenants, blood-bought people of God. We see that in Ephesians 5.25 where Christ loved the church that he gave himself up for her. And honestly, if we want to be right, I don't know how far we want to take this, but if we want to actually properly welcome people to this church, we ought not to say welcome to Youngstown Metro Church as if this location has anything to do with our church.

[16:15] We could be meeting down in the corner. But we should say welcome to this gathering of Youngstown Metro Church. You know? Just those small things that can express our convictions.

If you look at the family, for instance, if you look at a family institution, that's not necessarily an institution that has different parameters set. This is a group of people.

We ought to recognize the importance of what that commitment looks like and how it expresses itself in relation to church membership as well in our gatherings. For instance, growing up with my siblings, what, five stepsisters and one biological sister?

You know, you could imagine that I often got really annoyed at a lot of things living with all those females. You know? The cluttered bathroom.

All I want to do is brush my teeth and you have to go through this jungle of cords and hair dryers. Maybe the music that they listen to. All that boy band NSYNC stuff.

[17:17] I was, I listened to it too. I won't be, I won't lie. I know, I know.

I got some head shakers back there. But for instance, like we don't always agree with our siblings in that realm of being a family. However, at the end of the day, who are my sisters?

They're my family. They're my sisters. Yeah, I get annoyed at some things once in a while and we argue and bicker, but at the end of the day, we're family. So the church in a local context as expressed and it's prescribed by the New Testament is a body united in Jesus Christ as the head and it's also a family, the church, joined together by adoption by the blood of Christ.

And so I want to go into the second question here today. let me get it up on the screen. Why should I join a local church?

Why should I join a local church? There's a big church growth strategist out there. His name is Tom Rainer. He used to be the president of Lifeway and he produces all these resources, all these curriculums and all these sort of methods of how to grow your church.

[18:46] You know, books that are titled similar to like Breaking That 200 Mark, you know, Getting Up Over That Edge and things like that. So if Tom Rainer were here today sitting in the back somewhere, he'd be probably pulling his hair out because I'm doing it wrong.

Don't talk about this stuff that could possibly make disagreement in the church. No, don't talk about that stuff. You know, play some music and give a feel-good message.

That'll keep people coming and get more people to fill these seats. But without church membership marked out with a boundary line, it limits us.

of truly knowing who we're responsible for. Think about the implications of Hebrews 13, 17, where it says, Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will give an account someday.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be a no advantage to you. I remember actually the day I was installed as the pastor of this church. I had vows that I had to make and declare to this church body.

[19:59] It was a commitment that I'm going to love you and there's a dual commitment that you're going to love me and there was a beautiful time of anticipating that we're going to work things out, we're going to be a family.

Often there's an illustration throughout scripture of a pastor being that of a shepherd and his church being that of sheep and without church membership, you really don't know essentially how many sheep that you have that you need to be praying for, who in, according to Hebrews 13, who you're going to be given an account for, who you're going to be held in judgment of, who I'm going to be standing before judgment of God and all these names will be recalled of how I shepherded these people.

So the pastor is known as the guy or the men, plurality of pastors and elders, who stand at the sheepfold door and they know who's coming in, they know who's going out.

Lest a wolf come covered up in sheep's clothing and sneak on in and to only destroy the church as Titus 3 was the case.

We often think of this as a husband being married to a wife that he might never know. You live together, you sort of reside, you come home at the end of the day but you don't know her name, you don't talk to her, she's over there, we're over here.

[21 : 27] We often look at that as a problem in the church today is we don't know who we belong to. We don't know this one another relationship that was seen and observed in the early church.

And often in our culture today it's comforting knowing that we're able to sail in and sail out without much accountability. That's kind of what our culture drives within our convictions.

Just be your own boss essentially. However, how do you understand the Christian life? Think about that. How has the culture created your convictions in how you approach the local church?

is it something that you can simply sail in and out whenever you like? Is that what it truly means to pick up your cross and follow Jesus?

To bear with one another as a family? Is that truly what the climate of the early church was all about as they were receiving these apostolic letters of help, of how to tend to their organizations?

[22 : 35] Christians? Maybe you, maybe to you the Christian life is your own private network. It's your own private virtues. It's just you and God and shut the door nobody comes in, nobody can see.

Your own private disciplines. Sail in and sail out. After all, Jesus is mine and you don't have to be accountable to anybody. I'd like to ask you then, who was Paul addressing in his letters then?

What assemblies, as we read in Acts 2, 42, were people being added to daily? Those assemblies were growing and there was a marker line as we see in a couple verses we'll go into, especially dealing with church discipline.

In order to cast people out of that fellowship, you have to know who is in. The Christian life is a shared one another network. I want you to see that today.

That helps evangelize the world for Jesus Christ corporately. Regardless of what books say on the shelf at Barnes & Noble. And I want to look at a couple different reasons.

[23 : 46] Five reasons of why you should join a church. If it's not this church, it's to join a church somewhere at some time. Consider these five reasons as we observed in Nine Marks of a Healthy Church by Mark Dever.

These five reasons why you should join a church. The first reason, if you're taking notes, I don't know if they're going to be up on the screen, but if you're taking notes, the first reason I want to give you today is that you should join a church for the assurance of your faith.

Join a church for the assurance of your faith. Thinking in realms of that one another community, there's nothing more assuring of your faith than knowing that you have a dual commitment to people among you in this assembly.

As we strive to keep Christ's commands, as John 14, 21 says, whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

The local church is that accountability system, that encouragement system, that assures you and presses you on and pushes you in different realms to keep the commands of the Lord Jesus.

[24 : 59] This is something that you don't get in your own private networks, in your own sailing in and out. This is a consistent commitment that is only witnessed when you are participating in that.

When you join a church, you are asking your brothers and sisters essentially around you to hold you accountable. In this dual commitment, you trust others to know you and allow yourselves to be known by them.

You kind of just say, this is who I am. I need help. Can you help me with this? The church ought to say yes. Consider Colossians 3, 12 where it says, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, I'm gonna repeat that again, bearing with one another, one another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you so that you must forgive and above all, put on love which binds everything in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3, 12 through 14. Isn't life challenging enough on our own anyway? I mean, yeah, you can pick up another book on the Barnes & Noble shelf to maybe give you a little feel-good jollies in your private network at home that's isolated away from a corporate body of believers.

However, you're missing this vital component of discipleship and the Lord knew this well and that's why Titus was called to organize the churches with prescriptive means of protecting the gospel witness, protecting the gospel.

[26 : 46] So I challenge you today in looking at why you should join a church, maybe not this church, maybe another one, is to abandon the idea that you can follow Jesus Christ on your own, here and now.

Abandon the idea that you can follow Christ on your own. Our culture sometimes idolizes sort of even family over church. As if those two things were created to be separate detached entities in the first place, the Christian life is not just about you and your preference and ease, it's about Jesus Christ and seeing and cultivating Christ in one another and expressing Christ through these one another relationships.

The second reason why I'd like you to consider joining a church is for that church's edification. The church family ought to be known as long-term residents.

People who cash in, take out the big mortgage and live there, not merely go month to month as tenants do and that they can get out of their contract at a certain time.

Sort of like one foot in, one foot out. The church family ought to be long-term residents, not short-term tenants. And truly, bearing with one another, test the corporate efforts of the church and commitments as we saw in Colossians 3.

[28 : 16] So if you just sail in and out of church, the church truly isn't able to meet you at this deep commitment level that you will be known as a stranger.

For those who are church sailors, it would be expected at that time to feel disconnected and often forgotten like the church doesn't care about you. It's often, in my mind, related to the NFL or college, whatever, choose your vice and just that huddle process and looking at Sunday morning as that huddle with your team and that you go in, you get your marching orders, you know exactly what the Lord is doing within this church and how it's reaching outside of these walls and the mission that's flowing out of these doors.

That this is merely just a huddle to equip you, to encourage you so that we can come together and pray for one another, to hear the message of God's word and to sing together, to edify ourselves because when we lift our voices in unison with one in one common melody, we're singing to one another at the same time it comes out of our mouths.

This is an encouraging huddle and think about a football player coming in and missing all these huddles and then they break and then that guy comes over, I missed it, where are we going, what are we doing and then everything just goes and he's left behind.

If you're a sailor of the church coming in and out as you feel, as you feel like you want to do, you're going to feel disconnected, you're not gonna know what the church is up to, you're not gonna feel very connected.

[30 : 01] if you commit to this local body, for one, we will help you and partner with you in the work and life's challenges. If you struggle with gossip, we're gonna, we'll talk about that.

If you struggle with, if you're losing your assurance of salvation, this is a body to reassure you through prayer, through encouragement, through those texts throughout the week in our church directory saying, hey, I'm praying for you.

How assuring is that? And knowing that that other person is somebody that you're committed to. The church consists of mature believers and immature believers.

You got those speed racer Christians, you got the slower ones. And yeah, the speed racer Christians, I just had a conversation yesterday for breakfast with a, man, he's six speed, just, he feels like he can't connect to a church because he just feels like they're just at this lower level that he's, he's on this level, he's going, that if you are at that more mature level of just, you know, maybe at a certain standpoint wanting to neglect meeting together or maybe joining a Bible study because, oh yeah, Bible study, you know, we're gonna talk about this stuff.

Well, I wanna talk about the Greek, I wanna talk about the Hebrew. Well, how beautiful is it when those mature believers actually slow down and lock arms with somebody who's a little bit slower, maybe less mature in their faith in order to speed them up.

[31 : 31] This is the beauty of the local church that exceeds your personal preferences. Yeah, your personal preference might say, yeah, you want the Greek and Hebrew, but as far as spiritual life and your sanctification and discipleship, the Lord is going to grow those mature believers when they lock arms with people who are less mature in their faith.

Now, often people will probably even say, you know, Brent, if you want me to join your church, trust me, I got a lot of problems and I don't want you to have my problems.

Well, I wanna encourage you. If that's you and you feel like if you join a church that you'd be a hypocrite to join, we got a lot of problems here and we got our own problems and we deal with them. So just, we welcome more.

So just bring them on in. It's not about perfection, it's about progress. Membership is about mutual edification and consider that as we see in Hebrews 10, 19, which is sort of like the hallmark of this plural community, this one another community.

Hebrews 10, 19. And if you have your own Bible, if you have it with you or you're able to underline or circle, circle every time you see something in plural. Let us or us or one another or together.

[32 : 48] something that means like a corporate endeavor. It says in Hebrews 10, 19, it says, therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering. For he who promised is faithful and let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

The beginning of edification as the second reason of why you should join a church, it begins with being present and being active, not being church sailors or church hoppers.

It begins with being present, begins with attendance, begins with prayer, begins with service, locking arms. This commitment is our shared responsibility and expressed by our commitment to Jesus Christ.

Edification within the Christian life begins with building up the church. Like I mentioned last week, if we fail at getting our things in order within these walls, we're gonna be useless outside of these walls.

[34 : 41] If we're bearing with one another, forgiving one another, encouraging one another, as Hebrews 10 talks about, stir up one another. If we're really holding each other accountable and saying, hey, I'm with you, I know that you're struggling with this, but we're gonna do this together, that is the beauty of the local church and as God intended it to be.

Church membership is a means of discipleship to love one another as Christ loved us in John 15. To love not only with words or tongue, but in action, 1 John 3.

I ask you to link arms with one another. The third reason I'd like you to consider, yeah, the third reason I'd like you to consider why you should join a church is to protect the gospel.

This is very important. Membership, due to its shared responsibility and commitment, everything sort of how we've come up to the point of where we're at right now, we understand this shared one another commitment and holding each other accountable.

Membership, due to its shared one another commitment, preserves the truth of the gospel corporately to hold its leadership accountable for the message preached. If only false teachers and even heretics of all ages had its membership holding them accountable, listen to me today, if only false teachers had its membership holding them accountable, and unfortunately, sadly, what exists in many denominations and many churches, even within a 10-mile radius of us, is that you can't question leadership at all, and it is a blasphemous thing to do.

[36 : 27] However, as prescribed in the New Testament, as Paul's writings indicate, that leadership is not exempt from that one another commitment at all, and that is something that we ought to observe as a biblical means of protecting the gospel.

Galatians 6, 1 talks about this. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, keep watch over yourself, lest you too be tempted.

Now look at Galatians 6, 1. Brothers, if anyone, it doesn't mean if church, if just the members, if just people attending, but if anyone, leaders, attendees, anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, keep watch over yourself, lest you too be tempted.

So for leaders, if I begin preaching a sermon, all about how we are righteous and that all this self-centered stuff that exists often today, this should be a problem.

And this should be a problem where you go to, Rick, you come to me directly according to Matthew 18, and you talk to me personally about that and address it. Leadership ought to be held accountable.

[37 : 46] And also for members, this also means that if we as Christians begin to distort that line of living for the world and living for God, the gospel message and your gospel witness in your own life is going to be at stake.

It's going to be distorted. Or regarding factious members within the church, it distorts the unity, the purpose of the local church as we see Ecclesia, church in the New Testament.

Membership brings gospel verification. So I challenge you to join a church and enter into this great task of protecting the gospel together, corporately with one another, but also for leadership.

The fourth reason is why you should join a church is to evangelize the world. That weekly meetings of the local church are to be seen as missionary efforts.

In meeting and becoming members together, we meet the needs of the community together. That this is not merely just a social club where you come and hang out and have a cup of coffee as much as we do enjoy that.

[38 : 49] But it's honestly, it's honestly something that should be seen as a missionary effort. This is equipping the church or planting other churches.

This is equipping the church to providing disaster relief. When things are, when various things happen around this area, whether it's natural disasters, the church ought to be the first ones to come to aid and help.

These are meaningful partnerships that we as a church are involved with. We have the International Mission Board that has 10,000 missionaries reaching 1,200 people groups.

The North American Mission Board has five regions all over the United States and with 32 CEN cities nationwide. And these organizations provide disaster relief in tsunamis, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, and we're a part of that evangelistic effort.

You want to know who is the second, first responder after the American Red Cross in these disasters? The Southern Baptist Convention.

[40 : 03] Disaster relief teams. And you want to know what? One phone call and we can be there aiding in that as well. But don't we have to be a part of the community of God in order to band together and get a team together for those commitments?

Wouldn't it take somebody like Brianna saying, hey, you know, I just saw that come in. Like, is there anything that we can do? Could we maybe bust down? Absolutely we can. Let's go. And there we go.

Youngstown Metro Church. These are meaningful gatherings. The gospel is made visible through church membership. When people see us gather, they see a move of God which proclaims the truth of the gospel.

If church membership is invisible, how are we to corporately evangelize the world as well? I ask that you might consider joining us in this task.

And then last but not least, the fifth reason why you should join a church is for the glory of God. Definitely last but definitely not least. You should join a church for the glory of God.

[41 : 07] 1 Peter 2:12 instructs the church to live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

We see in the Sermon on the Mount, remember our wonderful series in the Sermon on the Mount that we had not so long ago, let your light shine among men who will see your good deeds and praise God.

John 13, love one another as I have loved you. All men will know that you are Christians by your love for one another. If they just see haughty church members within Youngstown Metro going at each other all the time and just, you know, drama, drama, drama.

But man, as people have attest to have been newer to the church walking in the doors, they sense love. They sense that genuineness and this is all glory to God because people know who we are a part of, that we are blood-bought sinners because of how we love one another.

It is evidence in our gatherings and I praise God for that. And we also see Matthew 16 where he says to Peter, I will build my church. This is not simply the growth of Christianity at large, but if you truly examine the pages and situations within Colossae, if you look at Ephesus, Christ is committed to purifying and building up his local ecclesia, his local church, assembly of believers for his glory.

[42 : 41] And we frantically run to the hospital when we're sick, right? People who are severely depressed go running to a shrink. But as Christ builds his church at a micro level in the local church, the broken world who is depressed, hurting, lost, and confused knows where to go.

They know where Youngstown Metro assembles for that hope. If you are a Christian today, this is why you must join a church. Youngstown Metro, you were called to pick up your cross and follow Jesus and it comes with great responsibility and it comes at great a cost.

And the church at large in America has quite staggering statistics and I'm not going to go into all of them because some of them were depressing. But as far as a Barna Group research in February 19th, 2020, just a couple months ago, they reported that two of five Christians report regularly attending multiple churches.

Kids, settle down. Think about this and understand what this report talks about. Two of five church members, two of five report regularly attending multiple churches.

Two of five are those church hoppers, those church sailors that leadership isn't able to hold accountable, that other members aren't able to know at a deep level of commitment.

[44 : 21] This is not biblically correct. Only 54% who are regularly attendees, regular attendees report actually being members.

54% who are regular attendees report being members. While 37% report them not being, just attending but not being members. On average, there's a statistic that the average Southern Baptist church consists of, say, 233 members in a church membership role, but only 70 members actually attend and are involved.

So, it begs that question, where are the other 166 members on that church role? Who the church is looking at a church role, praying for, reaching out to, and who are responsible for, that we have no idea.

They could be cheating on their wife. They could be indulging in sin. Who's to know and who's to hold them accountable? Church membership is the means of Christian discipleship, the vital means of Christian discipleship.

Devor, in his book, he said, if the church is a building, we must be the bricks. If the church is a body, we must be members of it. If the church is a household, then we must be committed as a family.

[45 : 41] Just as sheep are within a sheepfold and branches as part of a vine, we must also take great care in being his bricks, his body, his members, his family.

You've heard it once. I'll say it again. We are his church. These are convictional ideals. We are committed members to his sheepfold and branches as a part of his vine.

This small macro assembly, this local church, Youngstown Metro, is a snapshot of the macro assembly. You want to see what it's going to be like in glory one day? It's going to look just like this where we get together and we praise and worship God together.

We cannot undermine it or neglect it because it's God's means of sanctification in our lives. But here at Youngstown Metro, as we come to a close today, we have a living commitment expressed towards one another.

And this does not come with contingencies or preferences or maybe fits. But this koinonia, this participation, the same participation that we have in the body and the blood of Christ, in which we're, it's also participation of many members involved, and that participation is that of commitment to a marriage.

[47 : 04] We have that here. And hopefully you will see the problems if we forsake this commitment. Meaning that membership is actually worthless and even more so, membership with a bunch of sailors will confuse the testimony of what the church is according to the Bible and the purpose of even meeting.

The problems are hazardous for the local church because it brings confusions as to how to apply biblical applications of church discipline without this single one another committed assembly.

Additionally, the problems are hazardous for the individual. Your own, if there is any individualistic thing at stake, it is for your own sanctification to be involved in this community.

Who thinks that they are a member and how the congregation can testify to someone who they're invisible to. The problems are hazardous for the individual who thinks that they're members of this church.

But how can we testify properly to someone that is invisible to us? What sort of testimony can be declared upon someone's spiritual state?

[48 : 20] There's no assurance. There's no identification. It's just surface level relationships, high and by. That's not how the church ought to be and not how it was intended to exist.

The Bible practically applies and expresses this commitment and makes membership honest. And when we see our church directory, it makes it all the more meaningful. The directory, for instance, is a window of people responsible for.

We do have a membership directory and it is shared among our members so that we know who we ought to be praying for. If we don't see somebody for a while, obviously, with COVID-19 around, we haven't seen a lot of people for some time for good reason, for health concerns.

But these are people that we encourage regularly. We look at the church role and we pray down the list. We as elders pray down the list throughout the week. We reach out.

We text. We encourage. This is what the early church was all about. Church membership is a vital component of discipleship.

[49 : 29] It runs against the grain of our individualistic culture. This is where to live in the world that despises us and the message of Christ. Now, again, this isn't a biblical term but a modern term which encapsulates the early church's commitment to one another in their local assembly.

Church membership is not meant to be invisible representatives or church sailors. If only we could love the church with the same expression of loving Jesus. We love him regardless of how we feel.

Just as we love our spouse regardless of how we feel. We love the church because Christ gave himself up for in Ephesians 5.

God bought his church with his own blood in Acts 20. Followers of Jesus are called to love the church just as Christ loved his church.

and he was saved. We love the church with your hormone her. We love the church and suddenly have to love to love us the church and then canThere can we now Jetzt I'm going to love the church because the church for the church we love the church and take us and put the church that just as one another day of the church we love our church the church is because the church and the church and we both love about