

There is no such thing as a non-functioning church member.

Lesson for Sunday, August 7, 2022

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

INTRODUCTION:

- Begin by asking your class: *What do you think of when you hear the word "membership?"* Allow the class a few minutes to share their thoughts.
- A few years ago American Express began an advertising campaign which featured the phrase, "Membership has its privileges." Most people think like this when they think of the idea of membership.
 - For example, only members can shop at Sam's Club. Due to the annual fee they pay they supposedly receive a better shopping deal than the average citizen who is forced to shop somewhere else, not to mention they get free samples of food while they shop! *Membership has its privileges.*
- Churches have members, too. Technically there are some privileges that church members experience. But sadly, many take the secular idea of membership and apply it to their church membership.
- For many church members, membership is about receiving instead of giving, being served instead of serving, rights instead of responsibilities, and entitlements instead of sacrifices.
- Over the next few Sundays, we want to discover and develop a biblical understanding of church membership.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. Membership means we are all necessary parts of the whole.
 - a. Our text is a key passage in the Bible that deals clearly with church membership.
 - b. Paul uses the wonderful metaphor of the church being a body with many members (vs. 12, 14, 20, 27).
 - c. Some teach and believe that the idea of church membership is simply a worldly idea that has been adopted into church methodology. This passage makes the point clearly that membership is very biblical.
 - d. Our text also clearly explains that membership is defined differently inside the walls of the church than it is in the society at large.
 - e. Read again verse 27-28. Do you see the difference?
 - i. Members of a church comprise the whole and are essential parts of it.
 - ii. Paul carries the illustration further and explains that members are individual parts of the body (vs. 12).
 - iii. To be a church member is to be a part of one functioning body.
2. Membership means we are different but still work together.
 - a. In a country club mentality, you pay your dues so others will do the work for you. With church membership, everyone has a role or function (vs. 14-17). We are all different, but we are necessary parts of the whole.
 - b. The implication is that each part has to do its work or the whole body suffers (vs. 21).
 - i. Have you ever stopped to consider your place in this local body?
 - ii. Have you ever thought how your absence to church may impact the ability of the church body to properly function?
 - c. The Bible makes it clear that if one part does not do its job, the whole body does not function well. But if one part does its job well, the whole body rejoices and is stronger (vs. 26).
 - i. ILL: We see this in our own human bodies. The appendix is only the size of a finger, but when it is not functioning correctly there is a good chance the rest of the body is going to be able to perform well.
 - ii. Are you pulling your weight? Are you doing your part so the FBT body can function at optimum effectiveness?

3. Membership means everything we say and do is based on a biblical foundation of love.
 - a. Most are familiar with 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (the “Love Chapter”).
 - b. If we look at this chapter within the context of 1 Corinthians we see that Paul was using this detailed description of love to demonstrate how those within a church family relate one to another.
 - c. Read part of these verses thinking of how they apply to our relationship with the people sitting in your classroom. How healthy would our SS classes and our churches be if we each chose to abide by these principles?
 - d. We are not to love other church members because they are lovable! We are to love the unlovable as well. We are not to pray and encourage our leadership just when they are doing things the way we like. We are to pray and encourage them when they do things we don’t like.
 - e. Church membership is founded on love.
 - i. ILL: This is one advantage of being active in a Sunday School class. Being in a small group puts us in a position to live out the principles found in 1 Corinthians 13.
 - ii. When someone says something we don’t like it is not a reason to transfer to another class. Instead it is an opportunity to put into practice biblical love.
4. Church membership is functioning membership.
 - a. How do you remain a *biblical* member of a church? Notice that in that question we emphasized the word *biblical*.
 - i. You can remain on the church roll and never show up, give, or serve.
 - ii. That type of membership is not biblical. It is totally contrary to what the Bible teaches.
 - b. Biblical church membership is *functioning* membership. Paul has made that point in our text, 1 Corinthians 12:
 - i. The body is a unified whole. Likewise, the church is to be unified in its mission.
 - ii. The body is not only unified, it is made up of many parts. Paul mentioned feet, hands, ears, eyes, and noses.
 - iii. Each of these parts is supposed to function. The foot is to walk; the hand is to hold; and the ear is to hear.
 - c. We who are church members are all supposed to function in the church. *The concept of an inactive church member is an oxymoron!*

APPLICATION:

- The key to being a functional church member is one must be faithful.
 - Discuss the meaning of the word “faithful” in the context of a marriage, or in the context of how God relates to us.
- August 28 is “No Excuses Day” at FBT! Will you commit to be faithful and attend this special Sunday?