

# “Why the Church” - Week 10

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024 - MICHAEL BOWERS



## Summary - “Why the Church: Church Membership & Accountability”

Since mid-February, we have been walking through a series as a church entitled, Why The Church? Over the past few weeks and months, we have examined some core traits that we want to be known for and function by as a church body here at Rich Fork. These have included: Biblical Preaching, Evangelism & Discipleship, Prayer, Obedient Generosity, The Practices of Baptism & Lord’s Supper, Worship, Fellowship, and Leadership. This week we look at the traits of Membership and Accountability. We began this series with this statement: “The church is the vehicle that Jesus empowered and commanded to share the hope of the Gospel with the world.” If we believe this to be true, leadership, church membership, and accountability each play significant roles in protecting the church and its impact. The reality is in 2024, we often shop churches more than we commit to them. We seek what they can give us rather than how we give to each other through the local church. In addition to this we can also look at the church from only a global perspective, rather than seeing the importance at the local level, which is tied to membership and accountability, to local elders, and to a body of believers in that location. As we look this week at 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (and other Biblical texts) we will learn of the importance of membership and accountability. It is through leadership, membership, and accountability, as members of a local church, that we can be surrounded by people who want the best for our relationship with God, our families, and our marriages and will walk with us through the highs and lows of life in accountability to one another.

## Scripture - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

## Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

## Further Scripture Study:

**Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 6:1–2; Hebrews 13:1-19; 1 Peter 5:1–3; Revelation 1:10–11**

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

### Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

### Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

# Key Thoughts

In his book 12 Traits, David Platt gives six reasons we date the church in 2024 rather than commit to church membership.

1. We date the church because we are independent people who live in an individualistic culture.
2. We date the church because we are indecisive.
3. We date the church because we are immature in our faith.
4. We date the church because our view of the church is incomplete.
5. We date the church because we are socially overcommitted.
6. We date the church because we are indifferent to the church.

Being a church member is more than voting at a business meeting. It is more than a membership class or an additional commitment of your time and resources. As we study 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, it is evident that the church is a collective group of people called a church body, a group of gathered individuals who all play important roles in reaching people with the Gospel! There is the sharing of gifts; we function together but are individuals. These instructions from Paul are not given to a random group of people but those who comprised the church of Corinth (a local church body!).

The Bible expects followers of Christ to identify with and belong to a local church. Yes, we are a part of the global church of Jesus Christ, but we should have a church for which we say, I am a member of this congregation. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1: 2; Philippians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1, Colossians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1)

The Bible expects followers of Christ to be served by and submissive to local church leaders. There are moments in your Christian life when we, as leaders, will serve you and other times when we will instruct you. This is our responsibility and our gift. This is not to be done with arrogance or pride but rather servanthood, humility, and protection of you and the entire church body. (Acts 14:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 13:17)

Church leaders (elders/pastors) are not above wise counsel; they are to be above reproach, led by the Word, grace, and truth, and held accountable by each other and the Word of God. Leadership comes from those who grasp that they will give an account for their decisions. This should cause trepidation in a pastor/elder/shepherd/overseer. (1 Peter 5:1-3)

Part of being a member of a local church is having leaders you trust to have difficult conversations with about behaviors taking place in your life because they love you, the church, and its mission.

# Key Thoughts

The Bible expects followers of Christ to hold each other accountable. One of the greatest ways we love and care for each other is by holding each other accountable to obey God's word. If we desire to grow in making disciples as a church, we can't leave discipline out of disciple-making. (Galatians 6:1-2)

The Biblical model for accountability always leads toward restoration.

- Accountability within a church should aim at restoration.
- Bearing each other's burdens is a part of accountability
- Confession that leads to repentance draws someone closer to Christ.

Biblical Steps for accountability: (Matthew 18:15-17)

- Step One: Private Conversation
- Step Two: Bring along someone for clarification
- Step Three: Addressed by the church
- Step Four: Disassociation from the church

The Bible expects us to hold high the purity of the church. We have to protect the church, the church's mission, and the purpose of the church. In addition to this, we are also called to protect each other. (Galatians 6; Ephesians 2 & 5; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Timothy 3:14-15)

We should be members of a local church body of Christ, that teaches God's word, and has accountable leaders (elders/pastors), so that they can hold us accountable, lovingly confronting us in our sins, as we work toward Biblical restoration. As members of a local church, we can be surrounded by people who want the best for our relationship with God, our families, and our marriages, and will walk with us through the highs and lows of life in accountability with one another.

Is Rich Fork Church perfect in all of this? No. Do we strive to become better in this? Yes. Do we practice accountability and discipline? Yes. Do we value the mission of the church? Yes. Do we want to be a part of interrupting cycles of sin and destruction? Yes. Do we want to pick you up and walk with you toward the cross that promises forgiveness and restoration? Yes.

Church membership and accountability are gifts. They protect us individually, our church, the message of Christ, and our community. We desire as a church to do all of these things in love. (1 Corinthians 13)

## Reflect & Respond

What does the term “membership” typically make you think of in today’s culture? Does this skew your perspective on church membership and belonging to a local church body? In this are you truly following a Biblical worldview OR are you allowing culture to lead you? Why are people perhaps hesitant to commit to a local church body?

The Bible expects that believers will participate with and be committed to a local church body (what we today call church membership). Take a look at David Platt’s list of 6 Reasons People Date the Church on page 3 of this guide. Where have you been guilty of this in your walk? Which reason stands out to you most? Why?

As you study the scripture verses provided this week throughout this study, what benefits do you see from membership and commitment to a local church body? Are you perhaps missing out on these by not becoming a member of your local church?

If you are a member of a local church body, how has this helped to grow and strengthen your faith and walk as a believer?

How does being committed to a local church body impact accountability for you as a believer? Please share any examples of this from your own journey as you feel led and are comfortable.

Where have you witnessed biblical accountability and discipline within the local church body? (see list on page 4 of this guide). Where have you seen this not handled well?

Of all the scripture provided for you in this week’s study, which sticks out the most to you? Which verse, verses, or section of scripture is hitting you the hardest on a head and heart level?

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As we work through this series, please know that you have **FREE access** to the book Twelve Traits: Embracing God’s Design for the Church, by David Platt, which this series is taken from. You can find and download this short book for free at the link below and we encourage you to read through this with us throughout the series

[https://radical-net-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/images/20220308095847/12Traits\\_Web.pdf](https://radical-net-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/images/20220308095847/12Traits_Web.pdf)