

# WHY WE JOIN

Disciple Making Studies for the Church

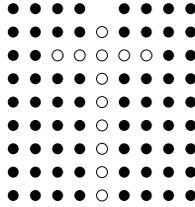


# **WHY WE JOIN**

**Disciple Making Studies for the Church**



The following reasons “Why We Join” are drawn from sermons preached at Grace Baptist Church on June 13, 20 and 27, 2021 as part of the series through 1 Corinthians entitled “Jesus in All of Life.” These sermons are available on our website: [gracebaptist.org](http://gracebaptist.org).  
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## Introduction

For many Christ-followers today, the question of membership in a local church is just that: A question without easy answers. *Why should I join a local church? Isn't attending really being a member? What does church membership entail? Why is it important? And, is it even biblical given the New Testament doesn't speak about it or seem to require it?*

### **The Church: Universal and Local**

Another issue revolves around our understanding of the church as both universal and local. The universal church is made up of all those throughout history who have been united by faith to Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. This is also understood as the “invisible” church since no one but God himself “sees” this group of people. Only he knows who is truly “in Christ.”

The local church is a local representation of the universal church in a specific locale. We see, for example, Paul writing to the Church in Philippi, the Church in Ephesus, and so on. Local churches are also described as a “visible” church in that the community around them sees and understands that they claim to be in the family of God. But Jesus himself warned that there would be weeds amongst the wheat (Matthew 13:24ff). The truth is that only God knows who in the “visible” church is actually part of the “invisible” church.

For purposes of this booklet, we are talking about the local church, that local and visible group of people who gather in the name of Jesus and are to be committed to one another and the mission of Christ.

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## The Church: Nature and Function

As we approach the issue of local church membership, it is important that we understand membership as an essential response to the nature and function of the church itself.

If the *nature* of the church is simply to be an organization made up of loosely connected individuals, then participation in the church at any level is left up to the religious consumer. In the same way, we expect the supermarket to provide what we need—we often see the church in the same way. It is there when we need it, but the obligation to join or even attend consistently is a matter of personal choice and convenience.

But what if the church is more than that? What if God designed the church to be an interdependent body where each individual part — each person — is essential, valuable, and necessary to the health and growth of the whole? What if the *nature* of the local church is actually like the human body where each part both contributes to the body and is vitally connected and dependent on it for health and life?

In answering this question, we move from the *nature* of the church to the *function* assigned to it by Christ himself. If the church exists merely to meet the desires of those who attend, then the *function* of the church is, again, simply to be a religious supermarket where people can find what they need when they need it.

But, what if we have it all wrong? What if we don't simply go to *church* but rather, *we are the Church*? What if the function of the church is for each of us to use our gifts in service, join our hearts in praise and prayer, grow together in the knowledge and grace of Christ, and pool our lives, talents, ideas, and resources in order to further the mission of Christ through the church to the world?

The answer to both questions of *nature* and *function* is simple. As we will see, the church is much more than a religious megastore doling out spiritual bites to those looking for a pick-me-up for their lives. The church is the family of God the Father, the body of God the Son, and the temple of God the Spirit. And its function? The church exists to magnify the glory and sovereign rule of God the Father, further the gospel mission of God the Son, all the while exercising the gifts of God the Spirit in caring for one another and sharing our life message

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with the world. That's why intentional membership in a local church is both a beautiful obligation and a joyous privilege.

### Is Church Membership Biblical?

Before we give reasons for joining a local church, we must deal with the modern objections to membership. As our society has become more and more individualistic, some have suggested that church membership isn't found in the Bible and is actually a ploy by church leaders to increase their membership rolls.

Technically, this objection is valid. You can search the New Testament and you won't find any mention of membership classes, membership lists, or new member receptions. But does this mean the apostles and the elders in the early churches didn't know who was in the church and who wasn't? Were their shepherding efforts thwarted because they didn't know who was committed to the local church and who wasn't? And, when they had to exercise church discipline, were they unable to put someone "out" of the church because they didn't really know who constituted the church in the first place?

The biblical evidence is quite clear. The early church was well-defined to the place that church leaders could clearly distinguish those who were in the Body of Christ and those who were not. This is demonstrated in the following ways:

#### 1. The early church was known as those devoted to the fundamentals of church life.

In the immediate aftermath of Pentecost, the church was already recognized as a specific group of Christ-followers due to their daily gatherings and their devotion to certain fundamental aspects of church life, as seen in Acts 2:42–47.

We notice several things in this text:

- The Christ-followers were *devoted* to their gathering and to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread (The Lord's Supper), and corporate prayers. Their devotion and participation marked them out as being the church.
- The Christ-followers *had all things in common*. The idea of sharing all things with strangers only makes sense if those with whom all things are shared were known to be devoted partners together in the church.
- They also *broke bread* (shared meals) in their homes together. Again, this presupposes everyone knew who was "in" the church.

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### 2. The early church practiced church discipline.

In Acts 5—where Ananias and Sapphira lied to God and paid with their lives—we read in verse 13 that “*none of the rest dared join them.*” From the beginning, the church was conspicuous, not hidden. They were a known group, and those who were not in the group were hesitant to join with them.

Today, things have changed. While the fear surrounding the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira kept unbelievers from gathering with the church in the earliest days, the same cannot be said today. Increasingly, churches are filled with those who have come for reasons other than repentance over sin, faith in Jesus, and a desire for spiritual growth. This makes it necessary to have a system whereby church leadership can gain some level of certainty that those committing to the church are, indeed, coming for the right reasons. At Grace Baptist Church, the process of membership, with classes and interviews and prayer, affords us this opportunity.

Additionally, the exercise of church discipline as seen in 1 Corinthians 5:4 and 3 John 10 required a known church membership. The ability to put someone “out” of the church was dependent upon knowing who was “in” the local church.

### 3. The early church practiced pastoral care.

The early church leaders understood their obligation to care for those who were put under their care. Hebrews 13:17 exhorted those in the church to “*obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.*”

As Christ held church leaders accountable for the way they exercised their office as elders, overseers, and pastors, it was essential for them to know those they were accountable to lead, feed, and care for as Christ’s “under-shepherds.” We see that those who were “in” the church were known and distinguishable from those who were not.

### 4. The early church understood that certain benevolent ministries demanded church membership.

In 1 Timothy 5:9, Paul is exhorting Timothy concerning the care of widows in the church of Ephesus. He says, “*Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband.*” Here we see that there was a list of those widows for whom the church accepted responsibility. Those women

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were “enrolled” in the benevolent program of the church. This gives us every reason to believe that, as the church grew, the leaders constructed systems to keep track of who was “with them” and who was not.

What the New Testament demonstrates is that, even if there were no actual lists of “baptized members” in the local church, it is everywhere assumed that the leaders of the church knew who was “in” the local church family and who wasn’t for purposes of provision, protection, accountability, and discipline.

### **But, Isn’t Being a Regular Attender Enough?**

As we will see, membership in a local church is more about committing as a serving partner than merely attending as a consumer. Membership signals an official public desire to identify with the family of God and the mission of Christ worked out through the church. Further, membership is a personal declaration of serving, living life, and pursuing Christlikeness. It is a team sport that cannot be accomplished apart from seeing the Christian life as lived out in community.

Membership also provides the church and the individual with opportunities regular attenders don’t enjoy. For example, the membership classes offer a deeper understanding of the church’s mission, the shared doctrinal and social values convictions, and the philosophy of ministry that guides church programming—while also offering a time for questions and answers. During the membership interview, a relationship begins between church leaders and incoming members. They learn the personal stories of each candidate as they recount how God the Father drew them savingly to Christ and what events and circumstances have shaped their lives. Lastly, membership allows individuals to participate in congregational decisions and votes, attendance at special member meetings, and other opportunities—such as serving on Candidate Review Teams, and special project teams.

### **So, Why Not Join a Local Church?**

Perhaps the better question is this: *If you are fully committed to Christ and to partnering with a local church ... why haven’t you become a member?* Today most of us are members of one organization or another, like Costco for instance. We have no trouble “joining” a shopping club, a streaming service, or restaurant loyalty program. Why? Simply because we believe we gain some benefit by joining. As we look at biblical reasons to join a local church, we’ll find that becoming

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a partnering member brings more benefits and enables more valuable opportunities to exercise love and giftedness than membership in any other organization. After all, the church is not just an organization. It is the very Body of Christ in our world today.

### The Starting Line

As Paul addressed the Church in Corinth, he spent the first several chapters chronicling several issues that had caused division in the church and greatly limited their usefulness as gospel lights in their culture. The first 11 chapters show that the basic problem in Corinth was the poor understanding the Christ-followers there had of the local church.

In chapter 12, Paul uses the human body as an illustration of how they should view the Body of Christ. Like our bodies, the church is a single unit composed of many parts. The church is not a group of independent individuals who come together often any more than the cells, organs, muscles, bones, and other parts of the human body can act or exist alone.

Paul's point is simple. The local church is an interconnected, interdependent group of Christ-followers, each having a crucial role to play in the mission of the church and the spiritual health of its members. As stated before—technically, we don't go to church: We are the church. And, like our human bodies, health comes as each individual part contributes what it is uniquely crafted to contribute. And, that is why membership matters so much.

### Opening Questions

- How does the New Testament speak to the fact that, while they may not have had official lists, the early church knew who was part of the Body, and who was not?
- How does Paul use the human body as a model of the church? What do you learn about the church from this model? How has your understanding of the nature of the church been informed by this? How do you see yourself in relation to the local church, in this case, Grace Baptist Church?
- Discuss this statement: Some people go to church, but those who really understand God's view would say: "*We are the church.*" What's the difference?

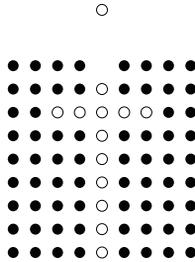
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- Discuss this statement: Too many Christians end up dating the church instead of making a lifelong commitment to partner with other believers in serving one another and accomplishing the mission of Christ through the local church to the world.
- As you look at your heart and the relationship you have with the local church, what are you pleased with? What needs to improve? What will you do to be a better partner in your church as you seek to manifest the Spirit for the common good?

### Pray

*Father in Heaven, you are the great architect of creation and all eternity. I am so thankful for the Church of Jesus Christ, who is our Head, our true Senior Pastor, and the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls. Forgive me Father, for allowing selfishness and the pursuit of my own dreams to get in the way of fully partnering with a local church in service, witness, and worship. Correct my thinking Lord, that you may find me useful to you and to your church, through Jesus Christ my Lord, Amen.*





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### **1. We join the local church to identify as committed followers of our Triune God and as members of his family, the Church.**

Church membership is a two-way identification. First, it is a personal and public statement of identification with God himself, which constitutes an important theological statement.

Consider this:

Paul, in 1 Timothy 3:15, declares that the church is “*the household of God ...*” In 1 Corinthians 12:27, Paul reminds his readers that the church is “*the body of Christ.*” And, in Ephesians 2:19–22, Paul proclaims that the church is “*a holy temple in the Lord*” and “*a dwelling place of God the Spirit.*”

So, membership in the church is actually a recognition and affirmation of the Triune God simply because the church is the household (family) of God the Father, the body of God the Son, and the temple of God’s the Spirit.

When you understand the biblical view of the local church as the spiritual representation of almighty God, your act of membership is a personal and public affirmation of the foundational doctrine of the Trinity of the God we serve.

Second, church membership is a personal and public identification with those who have been “*delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the*

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*kingdom of God's beloved son*" (Colossians 1:13). To join a local church is to tell the watching world that you are not your own, but have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20), and it is your ambition to pursue a life of holiness in order to be useful to your Master, Jesus Christ.

Further, membership is a declaration that you value those who are in Christ, and are willing to be identified with those who hold to a biblical worldview and way of life. In other words, you have found your forever family and now enjoy the comfort of belonging.

Throughout human history, it has always been that people want to belong. We are created for community as evidenced that it takes two to make a child, and that children are born into a "community" called family. That is how God designed it. We all need a personal relationship with a community of people who not only know us, but are committed to our spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

The church, as designed by God, is the best of all possible human communities. When we join a local church, we are publicly declaring our identification with and commitment to that family to which we belong—as a result of our new identity in Christ.

### **2. We join the local church to show that our salvation, while personal, is more about living out the gospel in community,**

If you're like me, you've probably heard someone declare: "*You must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!*" And understood rightly, that person's sentiment is correct. Each individual in each generation must come personally to recognize his or her sin, turn from it, and entrust his or her life to Jesus Christ by faith alone in the promises God has made concerning the Savior. Simply put, God has no grandchildren. He only has children.

But often that's where the salvation story ends. In the past, when organized religion became a force in human society, many put their faith in their church relationship. They boasted about being "in Christ" because they were "in the church" through baptism, participation in religious rituals and acts of compassion. Sadly, as the denominations grew their numbers, the message of saving faith in Jesus Christ alone gave way to a belief that membership in the church was the stuff of eternal salvation.

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In response, many evangelical preachers and teachers began exhorting their listeners that church membership wasn't enough. What was needed was a "personal relationship" with Christ. And again, they were right. But they were only half right. The result was a pendulum swing into a concept that salvation was only personal and consisted of a personal vertical relationship with God. Lost in this understanding of salvation was the truth that, while faith unites the believing sinner with Christ as Lord and Savior, that same faith also unites the believing sinner with every other believing sinner who is united by faith to Christ! This led to what we often see today as many who claim to love Christ, but have little commitment to the church that is his body.

The second reason we join the local church is to testify to ourselves and to the world around us that we believe God is not just saving individuals, but is gathering together "*a chosen race, a holy nation, and a people for his own possession*" (1 Peter 2:9).

We join the local church because it is there that we see a representation of this race, nation, and people. This counteracts our natural, selfish individualism and reminds us again that, in the end, God's glory will fill the Earth and his people will be "*a great multitude that no one could number, from all tribes and peoples and languages*" (Revelation 7:9).

The local church is a preview, a rehearsal, a pre-enactment of that day when all of God the Father's family, the body of God the Son, and the dwelling of God the Spirit will at last be freed from the presence and power of sin to worship, adore, and glorify our great God together as the one people of God that Jesus is building today.

But as we think about how Jesus Christ is building the family of God today, it is fair to ask what, if any, is the role of the church? And, that brings us to the third reason we join the local church.

### **3. We join the local church because God has saved, gifted, and designed us to play a unique part in one another's lives and the gospel mission of the church.**

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is confronting a divisive issue in the church. It seems a misunderstanding of the Spirit's gifts had left some believing they were more

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important in the church than were other believers. Paul speaks directly to the root problem declaring that every believer is essential to the health and missional success of the church.

In verse 7, Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that *“to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* His meaning is easy to understand: In and through every Christ-follower, God the Spirit works to manifest himself through gifted abilities designed to benefit the church.

In Ephesian 4:15,16, Paul gives even more information about the part each Christ-follower plays in the health and spiritual growth of the church:

*“Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*

Did you notice what Paul said in these two texts? Let me paraphrase. *“Every believer in the church has gifted abilities enabled by God the Spirit, and it is as each one works properly according to how God has equipped it that the body grows and is built up in love.”*

We join the local church because we have been saved and gifted to play an essential role in the lives of other believers and the gospel mission. The church, like the human body, only flourishes as each believer joyfully invests in the health and growth of the Body of Christ. And that investment today means publicly and personally identifying with a local Bible-teaching, gospel-preaching, “one-anothering” local church.

### **4. We join the local church because it is the primary means God uses to progressively sanctify us through the Spirit and the word.**

Our culture is quickly becoming infected with a personal belief that each of us can create his or her own reality. Known as “expressive individualism,” this philosophy of life is grounded in the belief that no force or entity — especially a transcendent deity — determines who an individual is or what his or her ethical and moral standards should be. Rather, each individual is an authentic,

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autonomous person, able to pull his or her own strings, determine his or her identity, and accomplish whatever he or she sets his or her mind to undertake.

Actually, this ideology is really just “me-ism.” That is, a determination to see all of life, and everyone and everything in it through the lens of “me” and more precisely, through the lens of “what will make me happy.”

In reality, many today are falling for the oldest lie in history. In Eden, Satan seduced Eve into thinking that doing what she felt would make her happy was the best choice—even if it meant going against the command of God. But her commitment to “me-ism,” to seeing everything through the grid of self-care, self-help, and self-aggrandizement brought her great regret, relational pain, and expulsion from the garden into a now sin-ruined creation.

Unfortunately, and to great detriment, “me-ism” has become all too pervasive in the church. Increasingly, Christ-followers are following the current of culture that makes everything about me, about my convenience, my comfort, my desires, my needs, and my overall well-being.

The direct result of this “me-ism” is readily seen in the lives of professed Christ-followers who think their spiritual health and growth can be accomplished without making the church a priority in their lives. What they are missing is the biblical truth that, as part of the Body of Christ – the local church – their spiritual life will wither to the extent they are detached from the body, to the extent that they believe the lie that spiritual health and usefulness to Christ can thrive without the church.

1 Corinthians 12:21 finds Paul speaking directly to the absurdity of “me-ism” in the Body of Christ.

*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.”*

Paul has been using the human body to illustrate the interconnectedness of those in the Body of Christ. He is very direct in uncovering the absurdity of one body part telling the rest of the human body “I don’t need you.” In the same way, the apostle is warning the Corinthian Church — and every Christ-follower today — that the idea any of us can run the race of faith, resist the temptations this world throws at us, and grow strong in knowledge, character, and usefulness for Christ without the local church is not only wrong but patently absurd.

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Why? The local church is the primary means God uses to progressively sanctify us through the Spirit and the word. It is in the community of the local church that we sit under the preaching of God's word by those appointed and gifted by God to bring his truth to bear on our lives. It is under the leadership of the church that our souls are guarded, challenged, counseled, comforted, and even confronted when needed. It is in corporate praise and prayer that we remind ourselves that salvation, while personal, is actually best lived out in community.

Together we sing the gospel, together we taste the gospel in the Lord's Supper, and together we watch the gospel story acted out in the act of baptism. Through all this, we come to understand that our salvation has brought us into a new kind of humanity, focused on Jesus Christ, mutually accountable to one another as we strive to be the church through which the manifold wisdom of God is made manifest to a watching world.

### **5. We join the local church because this is where we belong, where all are essential, and where God uses us to serve and encourage one another to love and good deeds.**

It is as Christ-followers committed to a local church that we find the place where we really belong. Paul said it best in Colossians 1:13, 14:

*“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

We've been rescued from the domain of darkness where the brokenness of sin held us fast without hope. But that is only half of the story. Christ not only rescued us, he also reformed us as a new kind of person and then joined us to all the other new creations in Christ allowing us to finally find the place where we belong and will belong for eternity.

But there's even more! Now that we've been born again into the family of God, we are privileged to be the means whereby Christ himself is serving, encouraging, discipling, and loving one another as we are being made more and more like Jesus.

One of the greatest privileges that comes along with being an invested partner in a local church, as an official member, is the opportunity to be used by Jesus in the lives of others.

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As we have already seen, the local church thrives to the extent that each Christ-follower is active in using his or her gifts, time, resources, ideas, and love in serving and encouraging others to grow in both their love for Christ and their display of Christ through good works. Membership pushes us to not only identify with the Body of Christ in a local church, but also to invest in the mission of Christ in the lives of our brothers and sisters.

### **6. We join the local church because this world is broken, dangerous, and unreliable. We need the comfort of knowing we will never face life alone.**

It is increasingly evident that we live in a broken world. Even more sobering is the reality that adversity with its pain and suffering and loss is inescapable. Time and time again, when Christ-followers experience tragedy, it will be their testimony that it was only through the love, presence, encouragement, and shared tears of those in their church that they were able to “make it through the darkest of days.”

And that’s the way it is supposed to be! In 1 Corinthians 12:26, Paul points out one of the most poignant reasons for being an invested partner and member of a local church:

*“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”*

When Jesus Christ rescued us from the domain of darkness, from bondage to the brokenness of sin, he did so in order to add us to a people he was building for his name’s sake. In doing so, he added us to a people, a family where we not only now belong eternally, but will never have to face the challenges and heartaches of this world alone.

Suffering is a given in this life, and it can overwhelm us—and, at times, even tempt us to get mad at God or even walk away from his love. But those who are part of a local church will find that their brothers and sisters in Christ will walk through the dark days with them, reminding them often that their loving heavenly Father only does what is best and right. He is real. He is right in all his ways. And, he is reliable, always faithful to keep his word and love his own.

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While suffering can cause us to doubt God's faithfulness at times, success can be just as dangerous to our dependence on Christ in every area of life. C.H. Spurgeon, the great London preacher of the late 1800s, once said: *"Out of a hundred men, while 99 can handle adversity, only 1 can handle prosperity."*

While his numbers may be off, we understand his point. Sometimes it is prosperity that moves us to forget how much we depend upon Christ and his church for spiritual health and growth. Many are those whose success has caused them to see the church as less and less important; and it is in those times that they desperately need their Christian brothers and sisters to courageously remind them of their privileged position in the Body of Christ.

And so, whatever situation we find ourselves, being surrounded by those whom Christ has rescued, reformed, and is transforming along with us is the best protection, comfort, and assistance we will find as we run the race of faith together, focused on Jesus.

### **7. We join the local church because God has designed it to display his glory in this world and provides all that is necessary to do so through his provision of Spirit-appointed leadership and Spirit-empowered giftedness.**

A final reason to be committed to a local church, as a partner in ministry and mission, is to help us take a macro view of the church. When we do, we'll find that God has designed the church for a specific purpose.

In sales, those who are trying to get customers to buy their products often give away samples. Others have a showroom where examples of their workmanship can be viewed before making a buying decision.

It turns out God also has a showroom, and it is the church. Here is what Paul says about the local church in Ephesus in Ephesians 2:8–10:

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."*

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Paul's message to the Ephesian believers is pretty simple, and yet incredibly profound. *"Your place in the people of God isn't your own doing! Your salvation isn't a result of your work because in reality your salvation is God's work, and you are now his workmanship, his sample, his showroom piece! And when you walk in the good works that God himself commands, you give evidence to a watching world that the gospel is true—and it is the power of salvation to everyone who believes."*

The local church is designed by God to project the light of his glory out into the darkness of a broken world. Further, God sends out samples of his transforming grace and it is called the church.

Think of this. When people want to know what it means to love God, trust savingly in Christ Jesus, and live out the biblical worldview, they are supposed to just look at the Christ-followers they know and see a sample. And that's why partnering with a local church is such a privilege.

Given that the church plays such a vital role in God's plan, as well as in the lives of Christ-followers, it is important that we understand how God himself provides for the church.

The New Testament declares that God provides two crucial things for his church. He appoints and raises up: *Spirit-appointed leadership and distributes Spirit-empowered giftedness.*

Paul instructs his readers about God's provision of leadership:

*"And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers..."*

— 1 Corinthians 12:28

*"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."*

— Ephesians 4:11,12

Previously, the benefit of having godly leadership overseeing, teaching, and shepherding the church was presented as a great benefit of partnering with a local church in membership. But, that is only true as the leaders are both appointed by God and accountable to him.

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Jesus Christ cares about those into whose hands he entrusts his people. That is why the qualifications and tasks of church leadership are clearly given in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5. But it all begins with the activity of God himself whereby he first drafts and then crafts those he appoints to shepherd his flock. These are the men whom the church is to first measure and test, and then affirm as those recognized as having been appointed by God himself.

But God the Spirit also empowers each Christ-follower to serve in the Body of Christ. Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12:7 that the Spirit's gifts are never to be used to glorify self, but always to be a manifestation of the Spirit, and a contribution helping to benefit the church:

*“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”*

Through the provision of *Spirit-appointed leadership* and *Spirit-empowered giftedness*, God provides everything necessary for the local church to learn, love, and live together for Christ's glory and their benefit. That is what makes being part of a local church, an invested partner in the mission of Christ through the church, such a privilege. No one who truly understands the magnitude of his or her salvation, and the precious opportunity believers have to magnify the glory of God, can consider the local church as anything less than a top life priority. After all, to love and serve the church is actually to love and serve Christ himself because the church is his Body, his Bride, and his Flock.

And that is actually *why we join!*

### Review Questions

- Consider the way technology offers “community.” How does this differ from actually being with those we love and need as we live in this broken world? How does this inform the way Christ-followers ought to see the corporate gatherings of the church?
- Why is membership at Grace Baptist Church really better labeled “partnership”? What are some of the reasons for becoming and growing as an invested ministry partner in the mission of Christ through Grace Baptist Church, and why are these reasons so important?
- Apparently, some in Corinth were using the Spirit's gifts — especially the gift of tongues — for personal glory rather than understanding that the Spirit's

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gifts were to manifest the Spirit and contribute to the health and mission of the church. How do you view the Spirit's gifts? How are you using your gifts for the common good?

### Pray

*Gracious, Heavenly Father, you have declared that the church is the means through which your glory will fill the Earth. That is such an amazing project, and I am so thankful to be part of your grand design. Lord, use me — my words, my arms, and my love — to strengthen your church and display your truth and grace in my world, for your glory and my joy, Amen.*











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