
The Communion of the Saints

Part 3:

The Case for Church Membership



Introduction

- **Augustine:** “He cannot have God for his father who does not have the church for His mother.”
 - **Luther:** “Apart from the church salvation is impossible.”
 - **Calvin:** “to those to whom God is a Father, the Church must also be a mother.”
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Introduction

- **Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter 25, Paragraph 2:** “outside of the visible the church...there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.”
 - **John Wesley:** “There is nothing more un-Christian than a solitary Christian.”
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Introduction

- **Cornerstone's Membership Covenant:**

“Having been brought by God’s gracious mercy to embrace the gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, the members of Cornerstone Bible Church do solemnly and joyfully covenant to walk together, united in Christ as one body to His glory.”

Introduction

- Church membership: a covenant to grow together in the grace and knowledge of God
 - A covenant is a commitment based on a **relationship**
 - A contract is a commitment, but a contract **does not require** a relationship
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Introduction

- **The Baker Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology** defines a covenant as: “the binding or establishing a relationship between two parties.”
 - Marriage
 - Church membership
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Introduction

- Objection: the words “church member” or “membership” do not appear in Scripture



Introduction

- Objection: the words “church member” or “membership” do not appear in Scripture
 - Answer: A theological concept may be present in Scripture even if the specific word does not appear
 - i.e. **Trinity, Missions, Membership**
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Church Membership is the New Testament Pattern

- The Church could be **Numbered**
 - **Acts 2:41:** “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”
 - **Acts 2:27:** “the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
 - **Acts 4:4:** “The number of the men came to be about five thousand.”
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Church Membership is the New Testament Pattern

- The Church could be **Gathered Together**
 - **Acts 14:27:** “When they had arrived and gathered the church together.”



Church Membership is the New Testament Pattern

- The Church could be called upon to **Select Leaders** from among itself
 - **Acts 6:2-3:** “So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. **3** Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.”
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Church Membership is the New Testament Pattern

- The Church could be **Listed**
 - **Romans 16:1-16**



Church Membership is the New Testament Pattern

- **Eric Lane:** “The church is not just a loose collection of individuals, it is a closely-knit structure like a human body and has therefore to be rightly organized. For such ordering it needs to know exactly who belongs to it. A family which sat down to its meal table or locked its doors at night, not knowing who was supposed to be there and who not, would be an extremely strange phenomenon. An army battalion which did not know whom to expect on parade would soon be in chaos. If the church is to be a true family and an effective fighting force it needs to know who exactly belongs to it.”
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Church Membership is Personified in the Body of Christ

- Church membership a **visible representation** of our spiritual union with Christ
 - Baptism is a public profession of our faith in Christ, membership is a public profession of our **union** with Christ
 - **1 Corinthians 12:27**: “Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.”
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Church Membership is Personified in the Body of Christ

- **1 Corinthians 12:14-18:** “For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not *a part* of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. 16 And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not *a part* of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less *a part* of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”
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Church Membership is Personified in the Body of Christ

- **Piper says,** “The New Testament knows of no Christians who are not accountable members of local churches. ‘Lone-Ranger Christians’ are a contradiction because becoming a Christian means being united to Christ, and union with Christ expresses itself in union with a local body of believers. It seems to us that in the New Testament, to be excluded from the local church was to be excluded from Christ.”

Church Membership is Necessary for Church Discipline

- Church discipline **requires** church membership
 - **Matthew 18:15-17 says**, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.* And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”
 - Tell it to the local church, not the universal church
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Church Membership is Necessary for Church Discipline

- Excommunication from the church:
 - **1 Corinthians 5:11-13:** “**11** But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. **12** For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? **13** But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”
 - There is a group **inside** the church and a group **outside** the church
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Church Membership is Necessary for Church Discipline

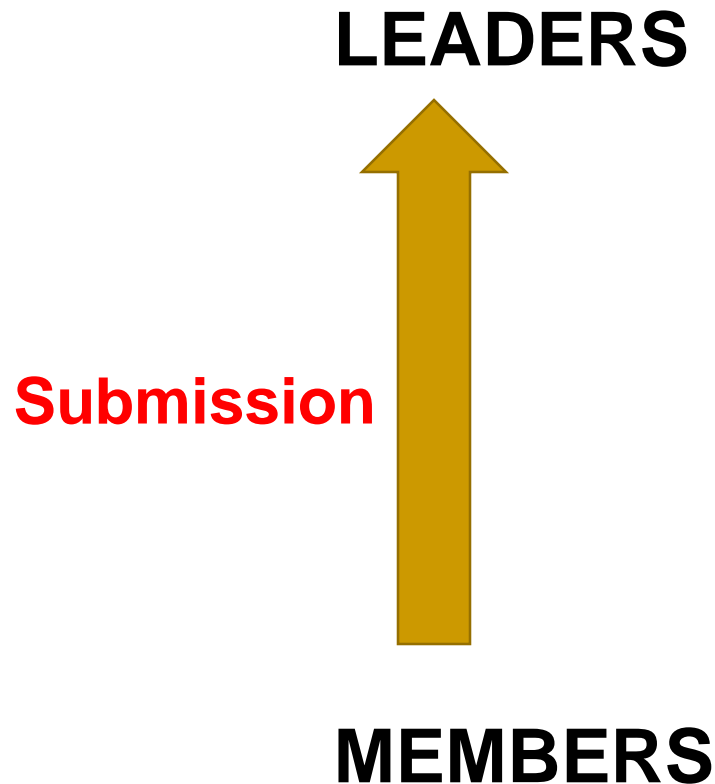
- “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”
 - To remove someone, he must have belonged in the first place
 - If there was no church membership, then you cannot **remove** him.
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Church Membership is Required for Shepherding the Flock

LEADERS

MEMBERS

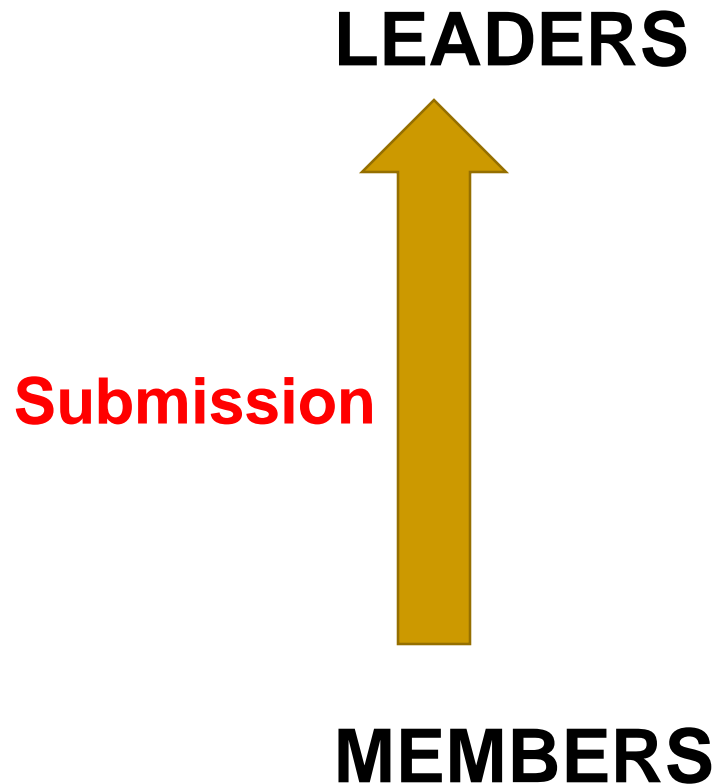
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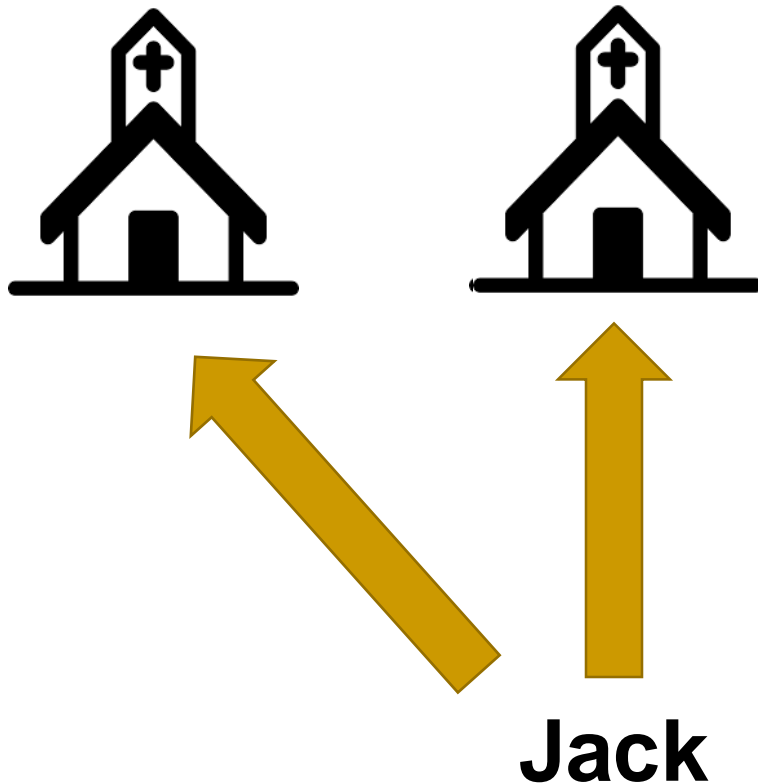
- Christians are commanded **to submit** to the pastors, elders, and leaders of their local church.
 - **Hebrews 13:17:** “*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.*”
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:12-13:** “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and *are over you* in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”
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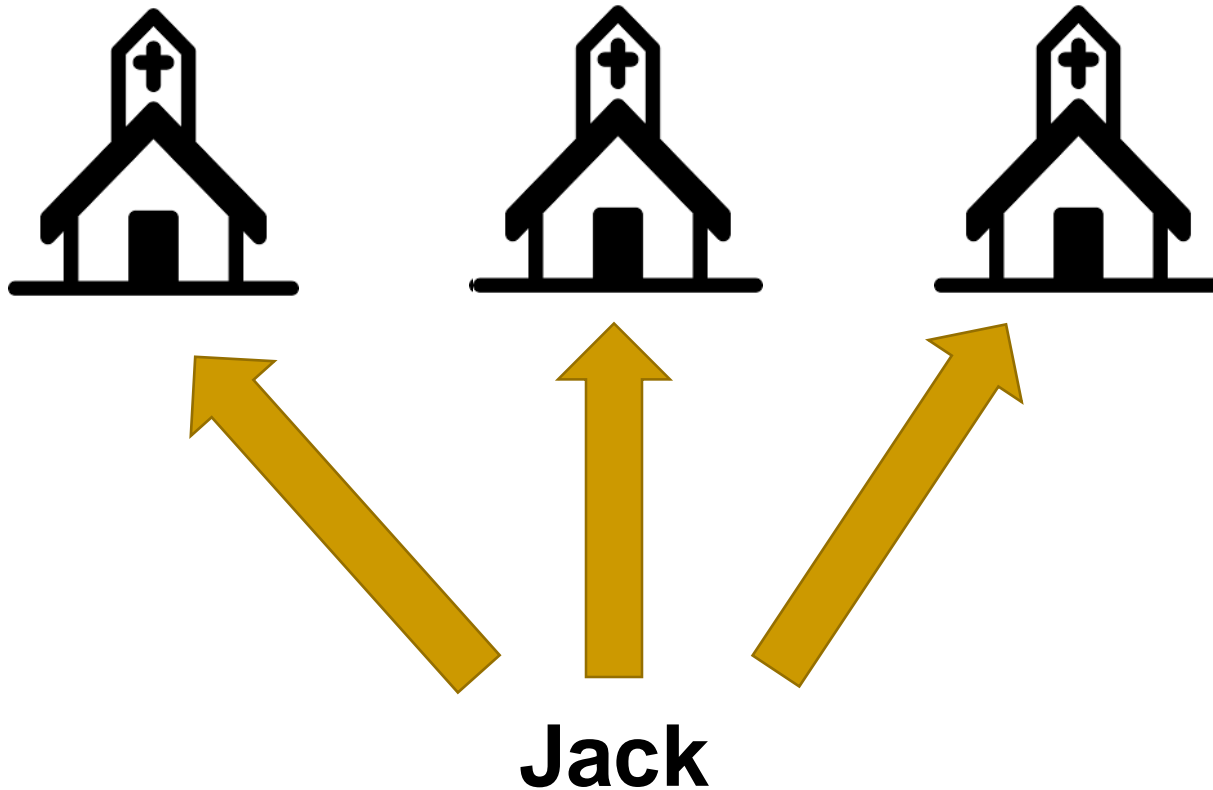


Jack

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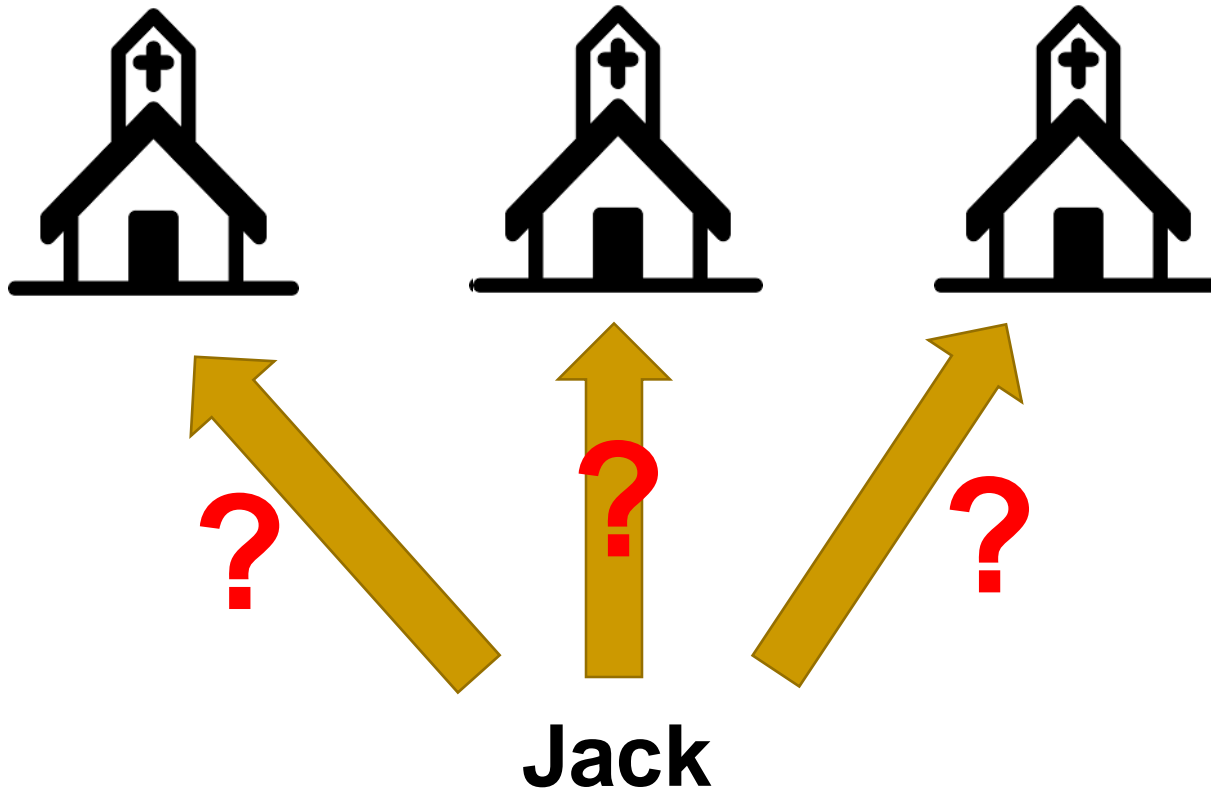


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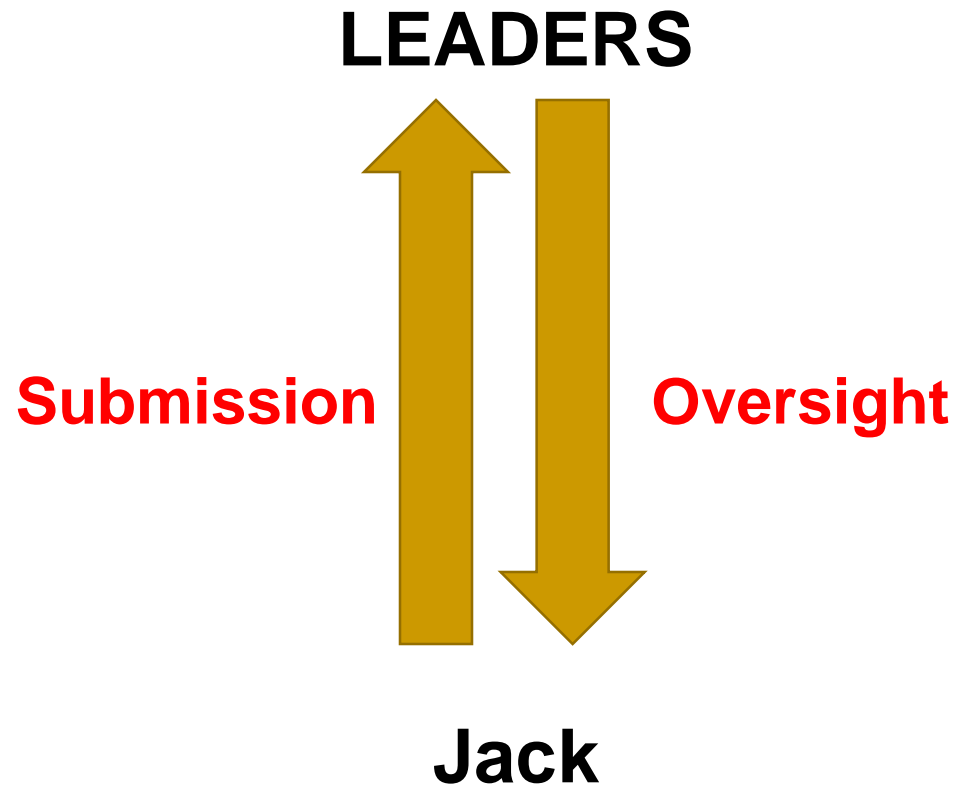


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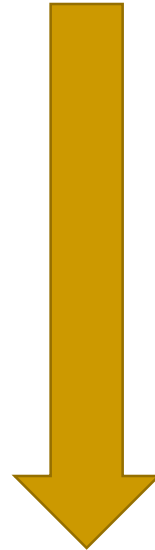


Church Membership is Required for Shepherding the Flock



Church Membership is Required for Shepherding the Flock

LEADERS



Oversight

MEMBERS

Church Membership is Required for Shepherding the Flock

- Church Leaders are to **keep watch** over the flock
 - **Acts 20:28:** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”
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Church Membership is Required for Shepherding the Flock

- **1 Peter 5:2-3:** “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over *those in your charge*, but being examples to the flock.”
 - “in your charge:” your portion, your lot
 - Leaders can only shepherd the flock if they know who is in the flock
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Church Membership is a Witness to the World

- The world knows we love Jesus when we love His church
 - **John 13:35:** “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - Biblical love is a **commitment**
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Church Membership is a Witness to the World

- **Lane** says, “They have only thought of themselves and not of the society of which they are a part. Marriage is a public affair, because, however private a matter individuals may think it to be, other members of the community have a right to know who belongs to whom and who is whose wife or husband. A society in which everyone behaved as this couple would be sheer chaos.”
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Church Membership is a Witness to the World

- It is important for **the world** to know who is a member and who is not a member
 - i.e. I want all sorts of non-Christians to attend Cornerstone to hear the gospel



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- It is important for **the world** to know who is a member and who is not a member
 - i.e. I want all sorts of non-Christians to attend Cornerstone to hear the gospel
 - “He’s been attending our church, but he’s not a member.”
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Church Membership is Integral in the Walk of the Believer

- Church Membership
 - You are committed to the people of God
 - The people of God are committed to you



Church Membership is Integral in the Walk of the Believer

- **Hebrews 10:24-25:** “let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”
 - Refers to the assembly: **worship services**
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Church Membership is Integral in the Walk of the Believer

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 - Refers to the assembly: **worship services**
 - Refers to “one anothers:” **mutual encouragement, relational accountability**
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Church Membership is Integral in the Walk of the Believer

- “as is the habit of some”
 - Don’t make it a habit to neglect meeting together
 - Don’t make it a habit to neglect the “one anothers”



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- **C.S. Lewis**, *God in the Dock*: “When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn’t go to the churches and Gospel Halls; . . . I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren’t fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.”
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