

# FOLLOWING CHRIST TOGETHER: THE BODY OF CHRIST & CHURCH ATTENDANCE

*Our lessons have already stressed the corporate dimension of the life of a new Christian. The Bible nowhere presents the Christian life as “just me and my Bible.” Instead, Christian vitality and obedience to Christ depends upon our being connected with a properly organized body of believers or local church.*

## WHAT IS A CHURCH?

The Bible speaks of a universal church, or all the true Christians of all time, but in the here-and-now, true Christians commit themselves to a local church.

1. According to **Acts 2:41-42**, who are those added to “their number”?

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*Note:* A visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word; that its only scriptural officers are elders, or pastors, and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined by Scripture.

2. In **Eph 4:11-16**, what unites a church? Whom did Christ give to help achieve this unity? What does it mean to be a child in this passage?

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3. What metaphor does Paul use for the church in **Rom 12:3-8**? (see **1 Cor 12**)

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➤ God designed the church to help Christians mature. As a body, a church has individual members with responsibilities to the health of the whole body.

## CHURCH IS NOT AN ADD-ON

We were created to glorify God. The Bible tells us that the primary institution in this age for bringing glory to God is the local church, as it is designed to be the primary vehicle where believers grow in the grace of Christ (**Eph 3:20-21**).

1. Read **Acts 20:28** and **Acts 22:8**. Whom did Paul persecute before his conversion? What do these verses tell us about how God sees the church?

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2. How does Jesus in **John 13:34-35** say the church proves her authenticity?

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3. What are some ways we show love to other Christians in **Rom 12:10-13**?

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*Note:* These passages assume a corporate relationship. You cannot follow well Christ’s command to love other believers without a local church.

4. In **1 Tim 3:14-15**, why is Timothy's conduct in churches so important?

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5. In **1 Cor 5:4-7**, how does the church gather? How does it act? What does it mean to be outside a church? Can you be 'cleansed out' without being 'in'?

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➤ The church can function only in individually organized bodies led by pastors. Many underestimate the local church. God-ordained and instituted by Christ, it is the pillar and ground of the *The Truth*. God has given the church to be the vehicle whereby he sanctifies us and wherein we live out Christ's commands. *Every believer ought to join and regularly attend a local church.*

### **GOD'S WARNING AND OUR BLESSING**

**Hebrews 10:23-25** ties our confession to our commitment to Christ's church.

1. What are we to "consider" in **Heb 10:24**?

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*Note:* You cannot stir up the love and good works of people you do not see. This passage also assumes that *we all* need help with these areas.

2. What are we not to "forsake" or "neglect" in **v 25**? What had some people allowed skipping church services to become?

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3. In **v25**, why do we gather? How should our attendance change over time?

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4. In **Acts 2:42**, what is the 2nd thing the new believers were committed to?

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5. What kind of an attendance habit is required to practice **Heb 13:17** well?

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6. What else does church commitment look like in **1 Tim 5:17 and Gal 6:6**?

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7. What do believers owe one another in **1 Thess 3:12; 4:9, 18; 5:11, & 15**?

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8. What do believers owe one another in **Eph 4:2, 32; 5:19 & 5:21**?

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➤ The word *church* means 'assembly.' There is no fellowship, love, edification, encouragement, or obedience without attendance. Church absence tempts other believers to sin. It puts our needs before theirs, which is the opposite of love. The less faithful we are in church attendance, the less we can obey Christ's commands. "One another" assumes regular gathering. When here, God nourishes and builds us up spiritually through the preaching of the Word and the fellowship of Christ's body.