

I'm A Member. Now What?

Scripture: John 13:35; John 15:8

Code: B130128

Faithful participation in a local body of believers is a vital part of the Christian life. It brings us into fellowship with other believers, submits us to the authority of the Lord through His church, makes us useful to God and His people, and shapes our identity in Christ and our testimony to the outside world.

Of course, church membership is not just a personal matter. Clearly, the issues are corporate as well. The ordinances given to the local church—baptism, communion—lose their significance outside the group setting. As believers pull away from participating in local, corporate worship, they miss out on profound blessings that can be experienced only in that setting.

There are many people today who would call themselves Christians who have never been baptized; many others have little to no interest in celebrating the Lord's Table. And for the countless professing believers who have adopted the consumer mindset regarding church, it's likely that neither baptism nor communion will ever be a priority for them.

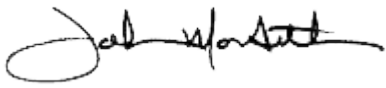
It's become such a problem that many churches have deprioritized the biblical ordinances, relegating them to unpopular midweek services or ignoring them altogether. They would rather reject the clear commands of Scripture than risk offending an unbeliever or making anyone uncomfortable with unfamiliar church practices.

That's tragic. Baptism is perhaps the clearest expression and testimony we have to the life-changing power of Christ. And communion unites the church in celebration of the sacrifice He made on our behalf. They're not optional rituals—they're vivid examples to the power and work of the Lord, ordained and instituted by God for the growth, unity, and testimony of His church.

And even in churches where baptism and communion are administered, they're often directed as expressions of personal faith rather than corporate identity. They don't celebrate the commonality of the church, as we're baptized into one body and gathered at the foot of the cross to share in Christ's sacrifice. They're erroneously observed as individual acts, with individual significance and individual results.

Just as believers need to fight against the temptation to withdraw from the church, we also need to fight the tendency to isolate ourselves within the congregation. We can't reject our corporate identity in Christ—we're united in love, faith, and purpose. Baptism and communion are public expressions of that unity.

In the next post, we're going to examine why church cannot be replaced with any other substitute.



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