

Gathered
to His
Name



Only One True Church

The one true “Church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15) was formed on earth by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and embraces all who are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 12:12-13).

This unity is taught in Paul’s epistles using the symbol of the one body—a living organism, formed of many members united in an unbreakable union (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 10:17, 12:12; Eph. 1:22-23, 2:16, 3:1-12, 4:1-16). Because these Scriptures teach that God Himself instituted this unity, we seek to display it by meeting simply as members of His body, gathered together unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone (Matt. 18:20).

Our desire is not to form another denomination or independent group, but to avoid any such affiliation in order to give clear expression to the precious truth of the one body. Recognizing that all who have accepted Christ as their Savior are fellow members of the one body, our desire is to see all members meeting in this simple fashion, giving preeminence to the only Head of the body, our Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 1:18).

Scripture teaches that we should be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond

of peace” (Eph. 4:1-3) by enjoying fellowship with all assemblies who likewise gather simply to the Lord’s name on the ground of the one body. This provides close bonds in:

- Following New Testament teaching and practice (1 Cor. 4:17, 7:17, 11:16)
- Embracing godly order (1 Cor. 14:33-34)
- Receiving to and excluding from the privileges and responsibilities of assembly life (2 Cor. 2:10a; 1 Cor. 5:11-13)
- Rejoicing and suffering with one another (1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2)
- Working together in outreach and in solving collective problems (Acts 15)
- Recognizing the Lord’s servants (Rom. 16:3-4; 1 Cor. 16:15-18)

The Holy Spirit In The Church

The Holy Spirit is the ever-present leader in the Church (Jn. 14:13-17, 26; 16:13-14). As worshippers and priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6), we seek to give Him complete liberty in our meetings. Since God has given all believers spiritual gifts for building up the Church (Rom.12:5-8; Eph. 4:7-12), we seek to use these gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the glory of God (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

Since the New Testament clearly teaches the priesthood of all believers, the clergy-laity system is an unscriptural hindrance to the liberty of the Spirit in this aspect of the believer's life. Further, it robs the Lord of His place as the only Head of the Church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23).

Those called by the Lord to serve Him full time (3 Jn. 5-8) go out in His work with the fellowship of the local assembly (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-27; 1 Thes. 5:12-13), trusting that the One who called will also provide. The worker is responsible to the Lord as he walks by faith. Yet, he remains subject, as is every brother and sister, to the care and discipline of the assembly.

Local Responsibility

Each local assembly has the responsibility to maintain the holiness of God's house in dependence upon the Lord (Ps. 93:5; 1 Cor. 5:11-13). This includes caring for, comforting, supporting and warning one another as needed (1 Thes. 5:14). It also includes the putting away of anyone whose doctrine or walk becomes evil (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Jn. 9-11), as well as restoring him when he repents (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

Scripture instructs us that women should not take a speaking part in the assembly meetings

(1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-12), and that they cover their heads in such meetings in symbolic recognition that the Lord's headship and glory are displayed there (1 Cor. 11:3-13).

We receive to the breaking of bread those believers who seek to walk in godliness and truth according to God's Word (Acts 2:41-42). Reception includes the privileges as well as the responsibilities of assembly life and fellowship. Such believers are received as *being* members of the body of Christ, not as *becoming* "members of our church." Since all Christians become members of the one true Church at conversion, we believe that any further membership is unnecessary and divisive (Acts 2:47b; 1 Cor. 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:2).

Responsibility in Reception

Those eating at the same table thereby express their fellowship and oneness. This is especially true at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:14-22). Wherever the bread is broken, each one who partakes is identified with all who break bread there and with their doctrine and practice. The bread symbolizes the body of the Lord, as well as the unity and the oneness of the body of Christ which is the Church (1 Cor. 10:17). Understanding these truths results in a three-part responsibility:

1. To examine ourselves individually before partaking of the Lord's supper. Doing so unworthily brings dishonor upon the One we remember and judgment on ourselves (1 Cor. 11:27-32).
2. To be careful that those breaking bread with us are true believers (2 Cor. 6:14-18) who are not living in moral (1 Cor. 5:11) or doctrinal (2 Cor. 4:1-6; 2 Jn. 7-9) evil, or knowingly associating with those who are (2 Jn. 9-11). Recognizing that we are the objects of the immense grace of God who bears with us daily, we desire to be patient and gracious in our carefulness.

Pastoral care is shown towards those who begin to stray from the Lord. However, if care is refused, and the straying leads to an evil course, Scripture teaches that we should act for God in removing evil from our midst (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

3. To partake of the Lord's supper only with those who meet simply on the ground of the one body. We are persuaded in 1 Corinthians 10:18 ("Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?") not to partake in settings where the truth of the one body is disregarded.

The *act* of remembering the Lord (the sacrifice) and the *basis* on which this is done (the altar) should be according to God's Word. We desire to partake of the Lord's supper only where the unity of the body of Christ and the holiness of God's house are recognized and sought after.

The Question of Associations

Dealing with the concept of "association with evil" is particularly difficult since many Christians, whose personal walk appears to be godly, seem indifferent to their associations. Some may deliberately stay "to be of help" in places where fundamentals of the faith are either ignored or denied. Others may continue in a place where gifts are in evidence, even though immorality is tolerated there. Was this not the case in Corinth?

While we do not judge the motives of such, our convictions are based on the principle suggested by 2 John 11: he who associates with one practicing evil "shares in his evil deeds." This same truth is taught in 1 Corinthians 5:6 and Galatians 5:9, where the insidious effects of moral and doctrinal evil in the company of saints are compared to the spreading of leaven in a lump of dough. The Scripture is clear: "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

Conclusion

As we gather to the Lord's name, we recognize His rights and authority. We proclaim allegiance to His Word, and confess that He alone is Head of His church and deserving of preeminence in all things. We also proclaim love to all the children of God, a love measured by the twin standards of obedience to God and care for one another (1 Jn. 5:2, 3:16).

We readily confess that both collectively and individually we often fall short of these high standards. Nevertheless, this is no reason to abandon the truth. We consider it an immense privilege and solemn responsibility to maintain that which has been received by God's grace from His Word.

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