



ENTER INTO FELLOWSHIP

With the Body of Christ

Welcome to the fourth step in your journey of centering your life around Jesus! In this part of our journey, we are going to learn about the importance of entering into fellowship with the body of Christ which is the church, God's people. People who are by any means perfect, but broken people like you and I who recognize they are sinners in need of a savior. So, right from the get go, don't expect people in the church to be perfect because as you already learned, recognizing we're not perfect is what actually God wants to see in our hearts.

That been said, God's design is for His people to live in unity, not uniformity, loving one another and helping each other to grow in spiritual maturity, to the stature of Jesus:

Ephesians 4:11-16 "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 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."

So many blessings come to our lives when we enter into fellowship with the body of Christ. Let's break it down a little more, shall we?

I. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

A. *Let's look at what the Church is not.*

1. The church is not a denominational group, a religious association or a structure designed to advance made-man beliefs about spiritual matters.
2. Neither it is an organization with political, social or economic ends. Although the life style of the believers must impact society, the church of Christ has a much higher calling than that of any human organization.
3. It is not a building in which God dwells.

- a) In the Old Testament God did dwell physically in buildings especially constructed for Him. (Read Exodus 25:8).
- b) But now God does not reside in a building. (Read Acts 17:24-25).
- c) The body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let's be aware of the privilege and great responsibility that we have upon us by being His temple. (Read **I Corinthians 6:19-20**).

B. *The Church is the Body of Christ:*

1. It is formed by those who have been saved by placing their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior (Read 1 Corinthians 12:27).
2. God has made all who believe members of one body, giving us diverse functions and roles according to His will. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:17-19).
 - a) We should note that it is not God's design for the members to function isolated one from another, we all need each other. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:20-21).
 - b) In spite of the fact that nobody is indispensable, our church needs all of us. Moreover, in God's eyes, those considered weak are indispensable. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:22).
3. By being the body of Christ, the Church is the physical representative of Jesus on the earth.
 - a) This body is spread throughout the whole world and is made up of believers from every nation.
 - b) Its visible manifestation is congregations of believers commonly called "local churches".
 - Even though the phrase "local church" is not found in the Scriptures, the concept is. The churches in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, etc. were all local congregations.
 - In them resides the biblical authority under which we minister.
 - That's why, even though para-church organizations (Christian groups outside the local church) are effective

and well-intended, they should not be a substitute for the role of the local church in the life of a believer.

- c) Paul individualized every congregation by referring to them according to their location but at the same time he united them all under the banner of “*the churches of Christ*” (Read **Romans 16:16**, Acts 8:1, 1 Corinthians 1:2).
- a) All of these were congregations that mutually supported each other but exercised biblical authority through their own body of leaders. The church in Antioch is a good example. (Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, **Acts 13:1-3**)

C. The Church is also the household of the living God. (The house and family)

1. The church as a living organism (the members not the buildings) is the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15)
2. God lives inside of every believer, but when we meet, He is also “among us”. (Read 2 Corinthians 6:16).
3. Therefore, being actively involved in your local church is to be a priority in your life. (Read Hebrews 10:24-25).
4. Since God is present when we congregate together, each church service is to be a celebration and exaltation of the name of Christ. That’s why we dedicate time to praise in our services. When you are in church, sing to Him with all of your heart, being conscious that you are in His presence.
5. Never overlook the spiritual power that the church has when it meets. Because of God’s presence there takes a special spiritual dimension in praise, prayer and in the very preaching of the Word. 1 Corinthians 14:3, 24-25 *D*.

D. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

1. To the Corinthians, Paul wrote his desire that we be a pure bride for our Lord. 2 Corinthians 11:2
2. Jesus has made His bride clean and is sanctifying her preparing her to be received as His eternal bride. Ephesians 5:25-27

3.

II. WHAT DOES THE CHURCH EXIST FOR?

- A. ***To spread the glorify God on earth by displaying (the way we live) and declaring (the message we proclaim) the love and the hope of The Gospel (Romans 15:5-6, Mathew 5:14-16, Matthew 28:18-20)***
- B. ***To pray and care for one another and to be a blessing for our community as we see in Acts 2:42-46***
 - 1. To learn and meditate in the Word.
 - 2. To enjoy fellowship with one another.
 - 3. To intercede for one another's needs.
 - 4. To physically care for other needs.
 - 5. To serve those in need and the disadvantaged within our communities.
 - 6. To persevere steadfastly together in the temple and the houses.
 - 7. To praise God together.
 - 8. To have favor with all people so that God adds to the church those that would be saved every day. (The purpose of having favor with people is to open doors for the Gospel and to inspire them to follow Jesus).

III. HOW CAN WE GET MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH THE CHURCH?

- A. By being baptized. Baptism is a symbolic representation of the person dying together with Christ to their old life and resurrecting together with Christ into a new life (Romans 6:3-4). It also represents the person entering into fellowship with the local body of believers, the church.
- B. By serving in a ministry team according to your spiritual gifts (Ephesians 4:16)
- C. By serving the people in our city alongside with the church (*James 1:27 Benevolence initiatives*).
- D. Being intentionally to live in community (Getting involved in one of our communities in homes)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe what the church is in your own words? What are some of the adjectives used in Scriptures to describe it?
2. How would you describe the mission of the universal Church?
3. Why is it important that the church works together and not individuals in isolation?
4. What is a good practical next step for you to enter into fellowship with the body of the church?

We encourage you to memorize these powerful verses:

Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as we see the day approaching."