

Titus study: The Blessing of Belonging – Week 2

A Case for Commitment and Church Membership

Opening Thoughts

Observations concerning Pope John Paul's funeral

Who were the two million people who came all the way to Rome? Who were they & why did they come?

- Leadership – Cardinals & Priests
- Committed believers who were committed to the Catholic Church - (members)
- Throngs - spectators who sensed that something was important and meaningful but have yet to discover Christ and have yet to commit to a life a committed church life..

This is in a way a look at the church

- Leadership
- True disciples – Committed believers (Members of the Body)
- Throngs – People who came for all kinds of reasons but are yet to know Christ and who are yet to commit to his church.

Theme of Titus – Paul's instruction to Titus to go to the Island of Crete and carve out a committed Christian Church

- To select and put into place a leadership of integrity
- To call the people out of a life of rebellion and into a life of discipleship
- To bring discipline to people who are damaging the fellowship. "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him." (Titus 3:10)
- To encourage the people to live a life of commitment so that together they, as Paul said, "...that they would learn to devote themselves to doing what is good so that their lives will be productive." (Titus 3: 14 – Paul's conclusion)

Why are believers called to commitment in a local church? (A Biblical overview)

1. Membership is a statement of identify as a follower of Christ & a part of his body – The Church.

Acts 2

³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

- ❖ Counted as a believer and as a member of the church after baptism.
- ❖ The New Testament church kept numerical records.
- ❖ Christianity was a call to authentic *fellowship* – being in community with a divine purpose - characterized by:
 - Having one heart and one mind – issue of truth and values
 - Generosity and sharing
 - Unity
 - Providing care – “Bearing with one another in love”

Acts 4 - One heart & one mind – There is power in numbers

³¹After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. ³²All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.

Ephesians 4 – A commitment to maintain unity & peace

¹As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ²Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

2. Membership is a commitment to discipleship & a life of growth. It is a commitment to a life that is in pursuit of sound doctrine that is reflected in living biblical lives.

- ❖ Commitment to biblical truth
- ❖ Commitment to biblical values
- ❖ Commitment to lifestyle

Titus 2

¹You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. ²Teach the older men to be temperate,

worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

³Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. ⁶Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled.

3. Commitment to a local church provides covering, protection, care and accountability from a leadership with integrity.

- ❖ Paul told Titus to first select leaders from among the church in Crete
- ❖ In Acts leadership was chosen from among the membership for the purpose of caring for the flock.

Acts 6 – Leaders were chosen from among the members to care for the church

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” ⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. *(The church became efficient and effective)*

- ❖ Leaders are held accountable for members of the church – so be nice to them

Hebrews 13 –

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- ❖ Elders are to care for those who have been entrusted to them

1 Peter 5

¹To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ²Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.

- ❖ Membership enables and requires church discipline. – Without membership it is illegal to dis-fellowship.

1 Corinthians 5 - The church is called to judge & discipline those who are members

¹It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. ²And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? ³Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. ⁶Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? ⁷Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—¹⁰not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

¹²What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”

- ❖ Membership enables the church to keep track of and care for the family.
 - A data base issue.
 - The night of commitment on April 17th.
 - The church is to keep records of its people and know their condition or situation.

1 Timothy 3

⁹No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, ¹⁰and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. ¹¹As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. ¹²Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. ¹³Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. ¹⁴So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. ¹⁵Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. ¹⁶If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

4. Membership is a call to ownership in the life of the church.
- ❖ Commitment to participate with time – attendance (showing up on a regular basis)
 - Why Sunday evening service will begin in the nicer weather.
 - ❖ Energy and talent – give of yourself for service
 - What it takes to do a given Sunday.
 - Everyone should work in the nursery once or twice a year. Church should be a lifestyle.
 - Another responsibility of leadership is to equip and mobilize participation.

Ephesians 4

¹²to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up
¹³until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

- ❖ Financially – a commitment to tithe

2 Corinthians 8 – Financial participation

¹And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ²Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. ⁵And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. ⁶So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. ⁷But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.