

# Reasons to Join a Healthy Church

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[ 0 : 00 ] So tonight, the concluding lesson is on reasons to join a church.

! Looking around, I think we've got mostly joined people.! But this is good still because you will have people.

In our church, and especially with younger generations, they'll ask, you know, why should I join the church? Or again, in some younger generations, they don't know anything about membership. They don't really understand that a whole lot. So it's important that we know so that we can communicate that knowledge to other people as well.

So I'll read the introduction in the scripture, and then we'll watch this final video together and have discussion afterwards. If you want to be a healthy Christian, you need to be a part of a healthy church.

[ 1 : 03 ] In this lesson, Dr. Dever gives reasons to join a local church, a practice that is obligatory for the Christian and has served as the pattern for Christians since the first century.

Acts 2, 42. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Okay, let's watch this final video together.

Okay, steady questions on page 62. Question number one. Mindfulness of the approaching day of judgment and encouraging others as part of a local church are related.

The answer is A, true. Two. Question two. According to Dr. Dever, joining a local church is a means to obey the imperative to A, love.

Question three. Joining a local church enables us to love when it is C, inconvenient.

[ 2 : 04 ] Question four. An abuse of authority does not delegitimize authority. The answer is A, true. Five.

Joining the local church in your A, B, and C. Profession, obedience, and assurance. So the answer is D, all of the above are closely related. And number six.

Christ's marked question to C, Saul, shows how closely he identifies with the church. So it's number one A, number two A, number three C, number four A, number five D, number six C.

And on the back are our discussion questions. And we have microphones up here. A microphone at least. One of them is up here. Question number one.

Thank you, Paul. What are some experiences you have had as a Christian that are encouragements for others to join a local church? Dan has the other microphone.

[ 3 : 11 ] What are some experiences you have had as a Christian that are encouragements for others to join a local church? Wes? The thing I really encourage for me to tell someone else to join a church is how my church family really cares about me.

It's not just, hey, how you doing? Okay. They really want to hear the answer. They care how you're doing. And how people, they pray for each other just because they care. Not just because, I don't know, it's a thing to do.

But just they truly care. And when you see how a lot of times church is going out and helping each other. Someone's got an issue and they need help getting their car started. Kind of like we helped out the friends with their vehicle.

We love them. And that's really encouragement to have a group of people because my friends at Exos aren't going to come help me, you know, clean out my backyard. Or I got a hole in my roof. Or maybe my toilet needs to get replaced. And I call Mike Dersham. Yeah. Okay, good. So, belonging to a caring community where people love selflessly and they're willing to put their talents or use their giftedness to serve other people.

[ 4 : 24 ] That's definitely a good reason why you should be encouraged to join a church. Any others? What are some expectations you, or experiences, sorry, you have had as a Christian that

are encouragements for others to join a local church?

Doylene? Constructive criticism. Hmm. Off and on, through being part of a church, I've had instances where people have come up to me and just, you know, express their concern about whatever action or maybe I said something wrong or just whatever it was.

It was nothing earth-shattering. But they loved me enough to they wanted to find out if we were on the same page. Or just to encourage me to get back on track because they saw that maybe I was starting to go to the left or go to the right but not stay on this small, narrow road.

So, I, even though sometimes that's uncomfortable, if you don't have those accountability groups, you're not going to grow. Good. Good. Yeah, so a willingness for people to tell you the truth or just to be real because they're, again, it's backed by genuine care.

You know, and wanting each person here to grow and mature in their Christ-likeness. So, you know, we ought to be able to have those conversations, whereas in other organizations, oftentimes people would rather avoid that or don't care enough.

[ 6 : 02 ] To do anything about it. Good. Speaking the truth in love. Any others? Experiences you've had, have had as a Christian that are encouragements for others to join a church?

Paul? I think it's where I have found my deepest friendships because of the shared values. And I know that in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, we have shared values of that.

But the deepest relationships and the deepest friendships are found where those values are the deepest. And they're deepest in the church. Good.

Good. So, a sense of family. And isn't it? I mean, especially if you've been a member of a church for a long time, you have been with people through a lot.

You know, maybe they've lost jobs or they've lost children or they've lost parents or they've, you name it, gone through all the different things that we go through in life. But, you know, you've consistently been there in a part of their life.

[ 7 : 13 ] Even when their kids grow up and go off to college or maybe move away when they come back. They still feel like this is a family for them.

I know from personal experience recently, my nephew was playing at one of his football games. And a member of my church growing up who's from Oklahoma, he went to University of Central Oklahoma, was in town.

And so he's like, you know, hey, I'm in town, I'm going to come watch the game. And Danny and I and our kids and my parents and maybe, well, obviously my oldest sister was there because it was her son.

But I think my other sister was there. Anyways, we hadn't seen him in years. Years. And he was my mentor when I was in a teenager in youth group.

Our youth pastor tried to connect each of us with somebody else in the church. And so he was a great mentor because he had season tickets to the Kansas City Chiefs.

[ 8 : 18 ] So I got to go to some playoff games, which was fun until they lost those games. But anyhow, he would always come to my baseball games. He had kids of his own.

And he was busy with his career, but he always made time. And it was neat because even though I hadn't seen him, I think that maybe the last time I would have saw him was when Danny and I were married, which would have been 12 years ago.

But he was there and it was like, it was like seeing family, you know. It wasn't really strange or awkward or anything. You know, we had a good conversation because those people do.

You feel like they are your family. And you get really close to the people in your church. And that's the way it's supposed to be. And I think some people would even say that they feel closer to their church family than they do their biological family.

So anyhow, that definitely is a great reason to join a church. Any others? Okay, Marsha, Willard, and Shirley.

[ 9 : 26 ] I think that going out with the engaged groups when we do service projects, it's been a very special time because some of the people will comment, boy, the people at your church really love each other.

You can really tell. Well, or your church must be a very special place because they would do something like this for us and not charge us anything for it. Good.

Yeah. Excellent point. So it's an opportunity for us to being in a church, belonging to a church. And especially when people say, people see these people are different.

I mean, they don't all look the same. But I can tell that they are united by something really special. And they realize that's the gospel.

And so church membership has a way to connect or share the gospel to the world in ways that astounds them.

[ 10 : 21 ] They see that we have this one thing in common that runs deeper than anything else. And we've been saved by Christ. Willard? Willard? This is the first church I've ever been a part of where you actually got calls from your deacon.

Just to say, need to know how you're doing and what we can pray for. I think we've had three deacons since we've been here.

I don't know why. If they just said, we can't stand you anymore. Not to our face. But anyway. I got a call from my daughter in Bozeman, Montana, yesterday.

She's the one that's got the sensitivity to mold that keeps her away from many buildings, including church buildings. That really became an issue more so.

It came to light while they were in Louisville, Kentucky. They kept contact. They were strong members of a strong church in Louisville.

[ 11 : 25 ] And, you know, kept in contact after they moved from there to Boston and from Boston to Bozeman. But they got a letter the other day.

Darla was a little upset. She got a letter the other day that said their church had revamped their membership policy. So that if you haven't been in church for two years, you're no longer a member. They felt totally dumped. Because of their situation, they have no support group where they're at. They can't become a part of a church. And so, in essence, you know, their elder that called them said, I'm sorry about this.

Or I guess they called him. They said, we're just really sorry about this. But that's the new policy. You know, how do you stop loving somebody that God has made a part of your fellowship?

[ 12 : 34 ] When their circumstances are such that they can't be a part of that. So that's why I, you know, I'm grateful for our church. And the reason I mentioned that was when she was talking to me about that, I thought about our church.

And the fact that I had gotten communication from my deacon not too long before that. And was just grateful that this church is responsive to that.

And trust that if for some circumstance we had to abandon the building and not be able to come, we wouldn't be a dumpy.

And you guys be the dumper. But, you know, and I'm, my heart says no, that would never happen here.

So I'm grateful for that. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I know, you know, here we went through our roles because we had, oh, Dan, do you remember how, 600 people?

[ 13 : 38 ] Or, yeah, a lot. It's like, but we don't have that many people. So, you know, our concern was to, you know, we and the elders went through that role for a long time.

If you remember, I mean, I seem like it was months just trying to figure out. Because our concern was where are these people, you know? And are they going to church somewhere else? And are they members of that church?

And if they are, then, you know, that needs to be reflected in our books as well. Or if we know that they've moved away or are attending somewhere else.

But I think you make a good point that in a case like that where they are far away at a necessity, but they haven't found a new church, you know, a church should be trying to figure out, okay, what is, what is, what's going on in your life?

How can we help? Or how can we, you know, what can we do on our part to help you get connected with the local church there instead of just writing a letter and saying, yeah.

[ 14 : 45 ] And we took a long time too when we crafted that letter as well to let people know that, you know, we, if you're not going to church, and we want you to come to church here, but if you are, we're not trying, this letter isn't trying to serve as a come back to us trying to steal you, but just as a means of communication.

Whereas if I think we would have just sent it out and been like, you haven't been here in a year, so you're toast. Just, that doesn't send a good message either. I'm glad you said that because I think sometimes we don't consider, you know, maybe there are some, yeah, situations out there where, you know, they were closely connected to a church.

They're not able to be there, but they haven't been able to get plugged in somewhere else, and they're still connected through, because things change with internet now. I mean, you can still be, it's not the same, but, you know, it's still, they're still connected.

And to think about that, too, that's a good observation. Shirley? Well, I was going to say, worshiping together with fellow Christians is just so wonderful.

I mean, truly worshiping the Lord is wonderful, our fellow Christians. And also, our mission teams, when we go out for missions, it is, we have, it's wonderful.

[16:08] And you can't do that without a group, without a church to send you, so. Good. Yeah, the togetherness, the reason why we're together.

We need that encouragement, that support. It does have an impact. To see God working, and to hear about how the Lord is working in different people's lives, to witness baptisms together, and to truly care, and be a part.

I mean, it's really important. Okay, let's move on to question two. What are ways you can encourage non-members in your church to commit to membership? How would you explain the personal and familial benefits of church membership to them?

In a lot of ways, I think we've already answered this question. So let's move on to question three.

What would you say to a professing Christian who voices hesitation about joining a church?

Have you ever had that conversation with somebody who they don't understand it, and they're just like, I don't, membership, that sounds like something you would do at a country club, or something like that.

[17:18] Have you ever had that conversation with anybody before, or been with somebody who's hesitant about it? Or, yeah, yeah. Not many people are willing to make long-term commitments.

In our culture these days. So what would you say to a professing Christian who voices hesitation about joining a church? Wes?

I would say it's kind of like the thing about meetings. Sometimes you need the meeting, but sometimes the meeting needs you. So they might think they're doing fine by, you know, watching something on TV, or just reading their Bible study, or whatever.

But by them coming, sometimes they're going to get a huge benefit by being here. But then other people are fed by the fact that they're here, and they're singing along with them, or they're giving them encouraging words, and things like that.

So it goes both ways. You get something out of it. But sometimes you're the one that's lifting somebody up just because you came over, hey, how you doing today? And they're like, happened to me out in the lobby one time, Bobby Bailey.

[18:23] And they're thinking about quitting the church, and we just said, hey, we really missed you guys. And she said, no one ever said anything like that to me. It just really lifted her up knowing that we cared about her.

So I just encourage them that it can go both ways. You might get something out of it, but you might also be the person who encourages somebody else and makes them understand something more. Okay, good. Danny? Danny? Well, we're supposed to have a relationship with Christ. That's what a lot of this is about is our personal relationship with Christ.

So we should emulate that relationship with him with others. We're supposed to have relationships with other people just as we do with Christ. So how can we do that if we're not committed and part of a church?

Good. So membership shows or communicates commitment. That's good, Doyleen. Because, you know, we're talking about, say, a person is here, and they have been coming for a long time to the point where we consider them a member, but they haven't joined.

[19:34] You know, what will we say? Well, I think if they don't join, then we kind of wonder, where is the commitment? And other people kind of wonder, why haven't they made that commitment?

Because when you do join, hopefully I'm not taking whatever you're going to say. But if they do join, it is. You're saying, this is my commitment. That's the one thing I talk to about people when they talk about wanting to join our church, which is, you know, really you're coming forward and, you know, you're making your commitment that this is your church where you're going to give of yourself, your time, your talents, your treasures to this congregation.

And in the same way, you know, when we accept their membership, we are making a commitment to them too, I think.

That, you know, you are a part of our body. Okay. Doyleen. Way into that with body, that's where I was going. Okay, good. Where the church, in the Bible in a couple of places, talks about the body of Christ.

And not everybody is the hand. Not everybody is the eye. Each person, God has a place for them. And if they're not there, I mean, you can say, you know, maybe you're the elbow.

[ 20 : 55 ] Well, if you're not there, then that arm is going to be weaker in the church. Yeah. You know, you've got a place to fulfill. And that's been one thing I've been pressed upon to pray a lot in my personal time is just to pray for our body to heal where it is weak.

And only God can do that because only he really knows where the weaknesses are. In our body. And ask him to continually heal our body. But everybody has to be willing to be part of the body. Yeah. Good. Good responses. Any others for this question? We'll move down to question four. How does Christ identify with the church? How does his identification with the church provide reasons for joining a church? What illustrations or metaphors has Christ used in talking about his relationship with the church?

We've already mentioned one. Somebody want to? There's a softball. Wes, you going to knock it out of the park? Sitting on the team. Well, like Dr. Deaver said, I wrote that down in my notes because when Christ said, why do you persecute me?

[ 22 : 15 ] Not why do you persecute the church? That in my notes, I said, attack on the church is an attack on Christ. So he's that closely connected to it that it's like, you attack the church, you're attacking me.

You know? Yeah. You're messing with me. Yeah. Yeah. He refers to himself as the head of the body, right? If you cut off the head of the body, what happens to the body?

It dies. It might wiggle for a little bit, but eventually it dies, right? Don't put that image in your mind. But for those of you who have grown up on the farm and you've taken care of chickens, a bride, a bride.

So when we're talking about marriage, we're talking about a great commitment, correct? And so in both of those situations, right, we're talking about a deep commitment.

We're talking about, you know, the fact that he is in authority over us, that, you know, in the church, we're part of that body with Christ as our head.

[ 23 : 25 ] And we are committed to one another because, but ultimately, you know, it's because of our commitment to Christ and his commitment and coming to us and dying for our sins and being our Lord and Savior, that commitment horizontally, I guess speaking, exists.

Any other things that you can mention? I mean, yeah, like Wes said, he identifies with us so closely that when Saul is persecuting the church, he doesn't say, hey, why are you persecuting, you know, John or Steve or whomever?

He's saying, you know, you're persecuting me. That's pretty close identification. Anything else? Paul, Doyleen? Shepherd. Shepherd.

Good. And the shepherd guides and protects and heals in certain cares. Yeah?

Because sheep are stupid. Good. Doyleen? When he told Peter, you know, upon this rock, I will build the church. He started the church.

[ 24 : 34 ] He initiated the church. He is the church. Good. Very good. Yeah. I think we could keep going on. So it's interesting when we think about all of these different things too.

He's our head, but he's also the foundation upon which we stand. Good. Paul? He's also the vine that the branches have to be connected to.

If we're not connected to the vine through his church, we're going to be weaker. We're going to start wilting. Yeah.

Yeah. There's no life in the... Keep going. Also, what Mark Devers said while I go, he said, you know, the church is God's evangelism program or evangelistic program.

I forgot exactly which word he used, but, you know, again, that's the outreach. Good. So now, taking it to the next level, with the next question, how does his identification with the church provide reasons for joining a church?

[ 25 : 31 ] And we can talk about the fact that if you're disconnected from the vine, then you wither, right? And potentially die.

Same thing from being disconnected from the head. Same thing with being out of commitment. And talking about joining.

You know, and everybody feels like you've probably heard this illustration before. And I'm sure it will continue to be shared by pastors probably until the Lord returns.

About the pastor who visits the church member who hasn't been in church for a long time. And he's got a charcoal fire going. You heard it before?

Anyone heard this one? All right. All right. All right. I can't believe this. I feel like this is one of those that I've, like, put away. I was like, I just, I can't share this one anymore because it's just been used so often.

[ 26 : 30 ] So there's a man who's not been going, he hasn't been in church for a long time. And so the pastor goes to visit him. And he knocks on the door. The man lets him in.

Pastor doesn't say a word. They just sit together. And there's a charcoal fire. And without saying a word, the pastor takes the tongs.

And he pulls out one of those charcoals out of the fire. And he sets it over to the side. And they watch that piece of charcoal just get cold. Right? And lose its flame.

And they just watch it. And the man who hadn't been in church, he looks at the pastor. And he says, I'll be at church next Sunday. And the pastor, you guys haven't heard that one before? Some of you had. But it's a great illustration because that says it.

And that's connecting to all these different things. When you're not connected with the people of God, and you're not abiding in the Lord and in his word, you grow cold.

[ 27 : 31 ] You grow hard and calloused. And at that point, you know, your distance is hurting and affecting you in ways that maybe you don't even realize.

And isn't it true, too, in the church, whenever we know that somebody has been missing for a while, and maybe they don't have like a real, excuse me, reason why that's the case, that we really miss that person.

And we're really, I've noticed that in this church, that, you know, there is a concern for when we haven't seen somebody. Where are they? Excuse me. And if they haven't been coming for a while, really, like somebody, you know, we need to figure out what's going on.

And I think that that's really important. And that goes a long way because it could be a number of different reasons why that's the case. But it speaks loudly to that person whenever they know that people in their church are paying attention to that, and they really do care.

Any other answers for the second part of that question? How does his identification with the church provide reasons for joining a church? We talk about Christ made the ultimate commitment for us.

[ 28 : 41 ] I mean, are we really asking that much from us to join a church? And so I believe that we're seeing that as in the younger generations that, you know, as was mentioned before, commitment is not something that they make as much as past generations have.

We see that reflected in marriages. We see that reflected in, I know I've mentioned it before, like the streaming services, you know, everything make a monthly payment.

So people, they'll make that monthly payment for years, but it's the idea that I'm not fully committed. So I'm talking like Netflix, you pay like \$13 a month. And they'll pay that like they would any other bill or commitment.

But it's the, they know they have the option. I have the option to terminate this whenever I want to. And so that makes them feel less committed. And we've seen it again in relationships. People, like when we saw the Roselles and we celebrated the fact that they've been married for 75 years, I really don't think that I'll ever see that again in the rest of my life because people just aren't making that commitment.

They're not making it as young. And so, anyhow, there is a, there is a real lack of commitment, a phobia almost to commitment in younger generations.

[ 30 : 12 ] Willard? Yeah, I think we need to be careful not to get the cart before the horse in that, in that a person that has, has real problem with becoming a part or a member of a local church, to me says there's something hindering the relationship with Christ.

And to me, that needs to be the focus. You know, it's not, nothing wrong with, you know, questioning, you know, thought about becoming a member of our church.

But if they haven't, for whatever reason, to me that speaks of the relationship or the fellowship, whatever, with Christ. And then to explore that and see if there's some area there that, that can be used to help them in their walk with God.

Because in reality, you know, I know it's a different generation, but God's not any different than he's always been. Yeah. And when people genuinely get saved and are walking with God, they're a part of a local church.

I mean, to me, that becomes automatic in a person's heart and life. So if it's not there, something's wrong there in that walk with Christ. That's a good observation too.

[ 31 : 29 ] I think also along with that is not pushing membership on people. And I agree, like with what Willard said, that, you know, when somebody's been coming for a while, it's good to eventually ask that question.

Have you thought about joining just to see, you know, one, is there something like that going on or some reason why? Or maybe they are newer to church and membership isn't a thing that they realized even existed.

But at the same time, there can be those who they're really eager to join really early on in the process of their going to church. And I think, you know, also in those cases, we're like, okay, well, let's back up a little bit and make sure that, you know, you're in line with what we believe as a church and this is really where you feel like God wants you to be a part.

And so I think we've got to be a little bit careful in that regard too. Any other comments or answers for this question? Paul?

One thing that occurred to me just now was that I've heard it said forever, and I've said it a thousand times probably in Sunday school classes or Bible studies or whatever, that Jesus is our example.

[ 32 : 56 ] Whenever we look at his life, in almost any area of life, anything that's going on, if we look to how Jesus reacted, what Jesus did, that's the best place we can go.

And so when we stop and say, how did Jesus feel about the church? Well, he gave his life for the church. He loved the church. He laid down his life.

And that should be reason enough. Amen. Amen. So now do you feel like you're prepared whenever you have this conversation with somebody and they ask, why should I join the church? I liked how in every one of Dr. Devers' points he used the word love. I think that's a good thing to keep reminding. Love, the love that Christ has for us, the love that we are to have for one another. Commitment is another good thing to use. And it does make a difference. I mean, you know, to be a part of a church, commitment is really important.

[ 33 : 59 ] And we know also that in our day and age where you don't just have one church in one town, there's not, you know, the Second Baptist Church of Corinth, if you're going to the church in Corinth or Galatia or Ephesus.

But in Bartlesville, does anybody even know how many churches are in Bartlesville? A bunch. Yeah, a lot.

And so in our community isn't any different than a lot of other communities in our world. But all this to say that it's becoming more of a thing where churches aren't stressing the commitment as much as they're stressing the, you know, come in anonymously and leave anonymously.

So the last thing I'll leave with you before we wrap up is the Kingstons who joined last Sunday. And I've heard this from others as well.

Is not to put anybody down, but one comment they made to me about our church, because I asked, why do you want to join our church?

[ 35 : 12 ] And they had visited some others, but they said from the first Sunday onward, people have acknowledged that we've been here, you know, instead of they've acknowledged our presence.

They've sought to come over, and it wasn't just one person or a couple people. It was a lot of people in the church. In fact, you know, it felt like to them, like everybody in the church.

And then remembering them when they came back, and those different kinds of things. And so, so, you know, good job. But all that to say is church is a family, and it should feel like a community.

And it is special that, you know, I thought it was awesome too. Whenever I came here, I was like, wow, these deacons, they actually call people in their church. They actually divide up the flock, and they actually call members and check on them, and ask for prayer requests, or for praises.

If Wes is your deacon, he'll ask you for praises, not just requests. Prayers and praises, sometimes we only focus on the requests, and sometimes we forget the importance of, of praising.

[ 36 : 23 ] Okay, let's pray. God, we do, we give you the praise, and we give you the honor for, for all that you are, and all that you've done for us, for the salvation, that you have provided for us in Christ Jesus, your son, for the privilege to be, called to this salvation, to have this eternal life, to be a part of your church, and to, to serve within it.

Lord, we're thankful for the honor, that you've given us to be, a part of the body of Christ. And so Lord, we pray that, membership would be something, that we, treasure, and that we value, and that we take seriously.

And Lord, I thank you that, that in many ways, that's, that's been the case. And so we're, I know for each one of us, we can say that we've been, on the receiving end, of somebody in our church, who took it upon themselves, to, to love us, and to care for us, and to teach us.

And that makes, so much difference. And so we're thankful for the church, that you've given and provided, for us. And Lord, we pray that, we would be committed members, as you've called us to be.

And that, for those who, haven't joined the church, Lord, that we would, be able to now, hopefully, communicate to them, effectively, why that is, such an important thing, for them to do, why it's so important, in the life of the church.

[ 37 : 53 ] And so, Lord, we pray that, as we just continue on, in this year, at our church, that Father, you would help us, to continue to, pursue the, the best church, that we can be, for your name, and for your glory, that we would be building, community, equipping, believers, sharing, Jesus your son, and teaching your word.

And Lord, we hope that the results, of all of that, will please you. And Father, that, that you would use our church, to continue to advance, your kingdom here on this earth.

And we love you, and God, we thank you, and we praise you. And we ask these things, in Jesus name. Amen. .