

"9Marks, as a ministry, has taken basic biblical teaching about the church and put it into the hands of pastors. Bobby, by way of these study guides, has taken this teaching and delivered it to the person in the pew. I am unaware of any other tool that so thoroughly and practically helps Christians understand God's plan for the local church. I can't wait to use these studies in my own congregation."

**Jeramie Rinne**, Senior Pastor, South Shore Baptist Church, Hingham, Massachusetts

"Bobby Jamieson has done local church pastors an incredible service by writing these study guides. Clear, biblical, and practical, they introduce the biblical basis for a healthy church. But more importantly, they challenge and equip church members to be part of the process of improving their own church's health. The studies work for individual, small group, and larger group settings. I have used them for the last year at my own church and appreciate how easy they are to adapt to my own setting. I don't know of anything else like them. Highly recommended!"

**Michael Lawrence**, Senior Pastor, Hinson Baptist Church, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church*

"This is a Bible study that is actually rooted in the Bible and involves actual study. In the 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides series a new standard has been set for personal theological discovery and corresponding personal application. Rich exposition, compelling questions, and clear syntheses combine to give a guided tour of ecclesiology—the theology of the church. I know of no better curriculum for generating understanding of and involvement in the church than this. It will be a welcome resource in our church for years to come."

**Rick Holland**, Senior Pastor, Mission Road Bible Church, Prairie Village, Kansas

"In America today we have the largest churches in the history of our nation, but the least amount of impact for Christ's kingdom. Slick marketing and finely polished vision statements are a foundation of sand. The 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides series is a refreshing departure from church-growth materials, towards an in-depth study of God's Word that will equip God's people with his vision for his Church. These study guides will lead local congregations to abandon secular methodologies for church growth and instead rely on Christ's principles for developing healthy, God-honoring assemblies."

**Carl J. Broggi**, Senior Pastor, Community Bible Church, Beaufort, South Carolina; President, Search the Scriptures Radio Ministry

"Anyone who loves Jesus will love what Jesus loves. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus loves the church. He knows about and cares for individual churches and wants them to be spiritually healthy and vibrant. Not only has Jesus laid down his life for the church but he has also given many instructions in his Word regarding how churches are to live and function in the world. This series of Bible studies by 9Marks shows how Scripture teaches these things. Any Christian who works through this curriculum, preferably with other believers, will be helped to see in fresh ways the wisdom, love, and power of God in establishing the church on earth. These studies are biblical, practical, and accessible. I highly recommend this curriculum as a useful tool that will help any church embrace its calling to display the glory of God to a watching world."

**Thomas Ascol**, Senior Pastor, Grace Baptist Church of Cape Coral, Florida; Executive Director, Founders Ministries

## **9MARKS HEALTHY CHURCH STUDY GUIDES**

*Built upon the Rock: The Church*

*Hearing God's Word: Expository Preaching*

*The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*

*God's Good News: The Gospel*

*Real Change: Conversion*

*Reaching the Lost: Evangelism*

*Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

*Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*

*Growing One Another: Discipleship in the Church*

*Leading One Another: Church Leadership*



# COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

**Bobby Jamieson**

**Mark Dever, General Editor**

**Jonathan Leeman, Managing Editor**



**HEALTHY CHURCH STUDY GUIDES**

**CROSSWAY**  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

Copyright © 2012 by 9Marks

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover design: Dual Identity inc.

First printing 2012

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture references marked NIV are taken from *The Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All emphases in Scripture have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-2548-3

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-2549-0

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-2550-6

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-2551-3

---

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

LB            20   19   18   17   16   15   14   13   12  
15   14   13   12   11   10   9   8   7   6   5   4   3   2   1

# CONTENTS

Introduction	7
An Important Mark of a Healthy Church: A Biblical Understanding of Membership, <i>by Mark Dever</i>	11
<b>WEEK 1</b>	
The Need for Membership	17
<b>WEEK 2</b>	
The Mandate for Membership	21
<b>WEEK 3</b>	
The Goal of Membership	27
<b>WEEK 4</b>	
The Challenges of Membership	31
<b>WEEK 5</b>	
The Nature of Membership	35
<b>WEEK 6</b>	
The Duties of Membership	39
<b>WEEK 7</b>	
The Glory of Membership	43
Teacher's Notes	47

# INTRODUCTION

What does the local church mean to you?

Maybe you love your church. You love the people. You love the preaching, the singing. You can't wait to show up on Sunday, and you cherish fellowship with other church members throughout the week.

Maybe the church is just a place you show up to a couple times a month. You sneak in late, duck out early.

We at 9Marks are convinced that the local church is God's plan for displaying his glory to the nations. And we want to help you catch and live out that vision, together with your whole church.

The 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides are a series of six- or seven-week studies on each of the "nine marks of a healthy church" plus one introductory study. These nine marks are the core convictions of our ministry. To provide a quick introduction to them, we've included a chapter from Mark Dever's book *What Is a Healthy Church?* with each study. We don't claim that these nine marks are the most important things about the church or the only important things about the church. But we do believe that they are biblical and therefore are helpful for churches.

So, in these studies, we're going to work through the biblical foundations and practical applications of each one. The ten studies are:

- *Built upon the Rock: The Church* (the introductory study)
- *Hearing God's Word: Expository Preaching*
- *The Whole Truth about God: Biblical Theology*
- *God's Good News: The Gospel*
- *Real Change: Conversion*
- *Reaching the Lost: Evangelism*
- *Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

- *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*
- *Growing One Another: Discipleship in the Church*
- *Leading One Another: Church Leadership*

Each session of these studies takes a close look at one or more passages of Scripture and considers how it applies to the life of the whole church. So, we hope that these studies are equally appropriate for Sunday school, small groups, and other contexts where a group of anywhere from two to two-hundred people can come together and discuss God's Word.

These studies are mainly driven by observation, interpretation, and application questions, so get ready to speak up! We also hope that these studies provide opportunities for people to reflect together on their experiences in the church, whatever those experiences may be.

Most people think church membership is like membership in a club. If you want a few extra benefits, or you aspire to be a leader someday, you should sign up. If not, you should feel free to come and go as you please. After all, church membership isn't in the Bible, is it?

What do you think? Is church membership biblical? Does it matter?

This study argues that church membership is biblical, that every Christian should be a member of a church, and that church membership makes a profound difference in the Christian life.

We begin with our need for church membership. Sin is deceitful, and we need to be truly accountable to others.

Next we consider the mandate for membership. After all, if church membership isn't biblical, it can't be anything more than optional. But we think that after carefully considering Scripture, you'll see that Jesus expects every Christian to be a committed member of a local church.

The next three sessions look at the goal, the challenges, and the nature of church membership. What are we working toward as church members? What are some of the roadblocks? And what exactly does it mean that we are members of one another?

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

The sixth session considers our responsibilities toward each other, and toward God, as church members. And the seventh session closes out our study by pulling back the curtain and glimpsing the glorious reality to which church membership points.

Whether you're a skeptic, ambivalent, or an active church member, we hope these studies will show you the necessity, power, and beauty of church membership.

# AN IMPORTANT MARK OF A HEALTHY CHURCH: A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MEMBERSHIP

BY MARK DEVER

*(Originally published as chapter 10 of What Is a Healthy Church?)*

Is church membership a biblical idea? In one sense, no. Open up the New Testament, and you won't find a story about, say, Priscilla and Aquila moving to the city of Rome, checking out one church, then another, and finally deciding to join a third. From what we can tell, nobody went "church shopping" because there was only one church in each community. In that sense, you won't find a list of church members in the New Testament.

But the churches of the New Testament apparently kept lists of people, such as the lists of widows supported by the church (1 Timothy 5). More significantly, a number of passages in the New Testament suggest that churches did have some way of delineating their members. They knew who belonged to their assemblies and who did not.

On one occasion, for instance, a man in the Corinthian church was living in immorality "that does not occur even among pagans" (1 Cor. 5:1 NIV). Paul wrote the Corinthians and told them to exclude this man from their assembly. Now stop and think about this. You cannot formally exclude someone if he is not formally included in the first place.

Paul appears to refer to this same man in his subsequent letter

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

to the Corinthians by referring to the “punishment inflicted on him by the majority” (2 Cor. 2:6 NIV). Stop and think again. You can only have a “majority” if there is a defined group of people, in this case a defined church membership.

Paul cared “who was in” and “who was out.” He cared because the Lord Jesus himself had granted churches the authority to draw a line—as best as they humanly can—around themselves, to mark themselves off from the world.

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. 18:18; see also 16:19; John 20:23)

Healthy churches, we have said, are congregations that increasingly reflect the character of God. Therefore, we want our earthly records to approximate, as much as possible, heaven’s own records—those names recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 21:27).

A healthy church aspires to receive and to dismiss individuals professing faith, just as the New Testament authors instruct. That is, it aspires to have a biblical understanding of membership.

## BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP MEANS COMMITMENT

A temple has bricks. A flock has sheep. A vine has branches. And a body has members. In one sense, church membership begins when Christ saves us and makes us a member of his body. Yet his work must then be given expression in an actual local church. In that sense, church membership begins when we commit to a particular body. Being a Christian means being joined to a church.

Scripture therefore instructs us to assemble regularly so that we can regularly rejoice in our common hope and regularly spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:23–25). Church membership is not simply a record of a box we once checked. It’s not a sentimental feeling. It’s not an expression of affection toward a familiar place. It’s not an expression of loyalty or disloyalty toward parents. It should be the reflection of a living commitment, or it is

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

worthless. Indeed, it's worse than worthless; it's dangerous, as we'll consider in a moment.

### **BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP MEANS TAKING RESPONSIBILITY**

The practice of church membership among Christians occurs when Christians grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular local church, we are telling the church's pastors and other members not just that we commit to them, but that we commit to them in gathering, giving, prayer, and service. We are telling them to expect certain things from us and to hold us accountable if we don't follow through. Joining a church is an act of saying, "I am now your responsibility, and you are my responsibility." (Yes, this is countercultural. Even more, it's counter to our sinful natures.)

Biblical membership means taking responsibility. It comes from our mutual obligations as spelled out in all of Scripture's one-another passages—love one another, serve one another, encourage one another. All of these commands should be encapsulated in the covenant of a healthy church.

Church members will grow to recognize their mutual responsibilities the more they cherish the gospel, understand that conversion is God's work, and evangelize by instructing "seekers" to count the cost. Less will Christians regard their churches with a come-as-you-please and get-what-you-can attachment—one more store to peek your head into at the Christian mall or market. More will they view them as a body in which all parts care for one another—the home in which they live.

Sadly, it is not uncommon to find a big gap between the number of people officially on the membership rolls and the number who regularly attend. Imagine a church of three thousand members with only six hundred regularly attending. I fear that many evangelical pastors today might be more proud of their so-called membership than distressed by the large number of members not attending. According to one recent study, the typical Southern Baptist church has 233 members with only 70 attending on Sunday morning.

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

And is our giving any better? What congregations have budgets that equal—let alone exceed—10 percent of the combined annual incomes of their members?

Physical limitations can prevent attendance and financial burdens can prevent giving. But otherwise one wonders if churches are making idols out of numbers. Numerical figures can be idolized just as easily as carved figures—perhaps more easily. Yet God will assess our lives and weigh our work, I think, rather than count our numbers.

### **BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP MEANS SALVATION AFFIRMATION**

What's so dangerous about nonattending, responsibility-shirking members? Uninvolved members confuse both real members and non-Christians about what it means to be a Christian. And active members do the voluntarily inactive members no service when they allow them to remain members of the church, since membership is the church's corporate endorsement of a person's salvation. Did you catch that? By calling someone a member of your church, you are saying that that individual has your church's endorsement as a Christian.

So if a congregation has not set its eyes upon an individual for months, even years, how can it testify that that person is faithfully running the race? If an individual is missing in action but has not joined some other Bible-believing church, how do we know if he or she was ever really a part of us (see 1 John 2:19)? We don't necessarily know that such uninvolved people are not Christians; we simply can't affirm that they are. We don't have to tell the individual, "We know you're going to hell"; we only have to say, "We can no longer express our confidence that you're going to heaven." When a person is perpetually absent, a church endorsement is, at best, naïve; at worst, dishonest.

A church that practices biblical church membership does not require perfection of its members; it requires humility and honesty. It doesn't call them to bare decisions but to real discipleship. It doesn't discount the importance of an individual's own experiences with God, but neither does it assume too much of those not-yet-

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

perfected individuals. This is why the New Testament presents a role for a corporate affirmation by those in covenant with God and with each other.

### **BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP IS MEANINGFUL**

I hope to see the membership statistics in churches become more and more meaningful so that the members in name become members in fact. From time to time, this means removing names from the church rolls (though not from our hearts). Most often, this means teaching new members what God intends for the church and continually reminding current members of their commitment to the life of the church. In my own church, we do this in a number of ways, from membership classes to reading the church covenant aloud every time we receive the Lord's Supper.

As our church has grown in healthiness, the head count on Sunday mornings has once again exceeded the number of names officially on our rolls. Surely this should be your desire for your church as well.

We don't love old friends well by allowing them to hold onto their membership in our congregations for sentimental reasons. We love them by encouraging them to join another church where they can love and be loved on a weekly, even daily, basis. In my own church's covenant, therefore, we pledge, "We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word." This commitment is part of healthy discipleship, particularly in our transient age.

A recovered practice of careful church membership will have many benefits. It will make the witness of our churches to non-Christians more clear. It will make it harder for weaker sheep to stray from the fold and still call themselves sheep. It will help shape and focus the discipleship of more mature Christians. It will help church leaders know exactly for whom they are responsible. In all of this, God will be glorified.

Pray that church membership will come to mean more than it currently does. That way, we can better know whom to pray for and

## **COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER**

whom to encourage and challenge in the faith. Church membership means being incorporated in practical ways into the body of Christ. It means traveling together as aliens and strangers in this world as we head to our heavenly home. Certainly another mark of a healthy church is a biblical understanding of church membership.



# WEEK 1

## THE NEED FOR MEMBERSHIP

### GETTING STARTED

1. Do you think it's important for Christians to be members of local churches? Why or why not?

### MAIN IDEA

Christians need to be members of a local church so that, through a church's accountability and exhortation, we are protected from sin's deceiving, hardening effects.

### DIGGING IN

Before we examine a passage of Scripture which shows us our need for church membership, let's clarify what exactly it is we mean by "church membership."

Here's how Jonathan Leeman defines church membership in his book *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*:

Church membership is (1) a covenant of union between a particular church and a Christian, a covenant that consists of (2) the church's affirmation of the Christian's gospel profession, (3) the church's promise to give oversight to the Christian, and (4) the Christian's promise to gather with the church and submit to its oversight.<sup>1</sup>

Let's unpack these four elements a little bit:

1. **Church membership is a covenant.** That is, it's a solemn agreement between a Christian and a local church. In this covenant:
2. **The church affirms the Christian's profession of faith in Christ.** That is, by extending church membership to an individ-

<sup>1</sup>Jonathon Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 217.

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

ual, the church is saying, “As far as we can tell, you’re a Christian. We’re putting our seal of approval on your claim to follow Christ.”

### 3. **The church promises to oversee the Christian’s discipleship.**

This comes through teaching, preaching, the elders’ oversight, and the mutual building up which all members of the church are to engage in (see Eph. 4:11–16).

### 4. **The Christian promises to regularly assemble with and submit to the church.** By committing to a church through membership, an individual Christian promises to regularly gather with this church and to submit to its authority and teaching.

*1. Before we jump into the passage for this study, let’s reflect a little on this understanding of church membership:*

- a) How does this definition differ from what you’ve thought or experienced of church membership?
- b) Does this understanding of church membership make it more appealing to you or less? Why?

With this foundation in place, let’s turn to Hebrews 3. The book of Hebrews is a “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22) addressed to professing Christians who are in danger of giving up their faith under the relentless pressure of persecution. In Hebrews chapter 3, the author specifically warns his readers not to be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness:

<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

<sup>9</sup> where your fathers put me to the test  
and saw my works for forty years.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore I was provoked with that generation,  
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;  
they have not known my ways.’

<sup>11</sup> As I swore in my wrath,  
‘They shall not enter my rest.’”

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

<sup>12</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Heb. 3:7–14)

**Note:** After the introductory remark, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,” verses 7 through 11 are an extended quotation from Psalm 95, which itself refers back to earlier incidents recorded in Exodus 17 and Numbers 14.

2. *What does the Holy Spirit exhort us not to do (vv. 7–8)? What does that mean?*
3. *What negative example does the author hold up for us? (Read Exodus 17:1–7 for background.)*
4. *What happened to the Israelites who hardened their hearts and disobeyed God (vv. 10–11)?*
5. *What does the author of Hebrews tell us to make sure doesn’t happen to us (vv. 12–13)?*
6. *What does this passage tell us to do in order to make sure that we don’t fall away from the living God (v. 13)?*
7. *Give some practical, everyday examples of how you exhort your fellow church members on a regular basis. If you can’t think of any, what’s one practical way you can begin to help others grow in godliness and not be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness?*
8. *In verse 13, the author warns us not to be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. What does this teach us about sin?*
9. *Do you think of sin as something active, dangerous, and threatening, or merely as something that causes an occasional minor slip-up here and there?*

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

*How should this passage's teaching about the nature of sin shape our lives as Christians?*

*10. How is someone who is not a member of a church especially susceptible to being hardened by sin's deceitfulness?*

*11. How do we know that we share in Christ (v. 14)? What effect should this have on how we live as Christians?*

*12. In light of this passage, how would you respond to someone who said, "I don't need to join a church. I can grow as a Christian just fine by coming to church whenever I want to, wherever I want to"?*

# TEACHER'S NOTES FOR WEEK 1

## DIGGING IN

1. Answers will vary.
2. In Hebrews 3:7–8, the Holy Spirit exhorts us not to harden our hearts. This means that we must not rebel against God and his Word, but rather must humbly submit to it. Rather than setting ourselves up against him, we must bow before him and allow his Word to expose our sin and lead us away from it (Heb. 4:12–13).
3. The negative example the author holds up for us is the Israelites' grumbling in the wilderness when they had no water (Ex. 17:1–7). In this incident, the people did not trust that God would be faithful to his word and would provide for them. Rather, as Psalm 95 says, they put God to the test and demanded that he give them what they wanted, now.
4. Hebrews 3:10–11 tells us that the Israelites who disobeyed God were punished by God and were forced to die in the wilderness instead of entering the Promised Land.
5. The author of Hebrews tells us to make sure that none of us have an evil, unbelieving heart which causes us to fall away from the living God (v. 12). Further, he warns us not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
6. This passage tells us to *exhort each other every day* in order to make sure that we don't fall away from the living God (v. 13).
7. Answers will vary.
8. That verse 13 tells us not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness teaches us that sin is an active, dangerous force within us. It teaches us that sin lies to us and seeks to entice us, promising things that it won't deliver. It teaches us that sin can "harden" us. It can lure us in to a life of greater and greater sinfulness until our hearts are no longer sensitive to God's Word and no longer convicted by his Spirit when we sin. In sum, verse 13 teaches us that sin is a deadly, dangerous enemy within us.
9. Answers to the first question will vary. Regarding the second question, the basic idea is that this passage's teaching about sin should stir us up to actively oppose sin, watch against sin, and make serious efforts to help others overcome sin. Rather than being passive and resting in a false sense of security from sin, we must help others overcome sin and seek help from

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

others to overcome sin because sin is constantly trying to deceive us. As John Owen famously put it, “You must always be killing sin or it will be killing you.”

It should be emphasized that one of the author’s main points is that we are not to engage in this effort alone, but we are to exhort *each other* so that we wouldn’t be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. Because sin lies to us, we need others to help unmask those lies.

10. Someone who is not a member of a church is especially susceptible to being hardened by sin’s deceitfulness because they are not accountable to anyone. Fellow church members are under the authority of the same church. They’ve committed to each other to watch over each other’s lives. And, if a church member begins to cherish their sin more than Jesus, the whole church is called to pursue that individual, even to the point of exclusion from membership if he or she doesn’t repent.

The problem with refusing to join a church is that you can simply walk away at any time with no real consequences. You don’t have any real accountability. There’s no “teeth” to the church’s discipleship. And sin will exploit that to its advantage and our ruin. Further, the kind of independent, autonomous attitude which often leads to and is furthered by not joining a church is itself a dangerous manifestation of spiritual pride. It’s like saying, “Yeah, other people might need help and accountability and exhortation in order to not be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness, but not me!”

11. We know that we share in Christ *if we persevere to the end* (v. 14). Thus, perseverance in faith and faithful living is one of the great marks of being a true believer. This should encourage us to constantly renew our efforts to fight sin, strengthen faith, renew our love for the Lord, and seek to help and be helped by other believers. It should remind us that we’re running a marathon, not a sprint, and that we need to constantly depend on God’s grace in order to remain faithful to Christ throughout our lives.

12. Answers will vary, but they should especially draw on what we discussed in question 10. Further, consider the definition of church membership we discussed at the beginning of this session.

- If church membership involves the church affirming a Christian’s profession, every Christian should desire that affirmation. Submitting ourselves to the church’s examination should only help us to more clearly see God’s work in our lives.
- Further, the church’s promise to oversee one’s discipleship means that the church is committing to do that individual spiritual good.

## COMMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER

Not just me, myself, and I are trying to further my spiritual growth, but the whole church is striving to build me up in Christ.

- The Christian's promise to gather with the church and submit to its oversight is also spiritually beneficial. Gathering weekly with others gives them a chance to stir us up to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24–25). Hearing Scripture read and preached, singing and praying together, and the other activities of corporate worship strengthen our faith and stir our souls. And submitting to the church's oversight helps us grow in humility—one of the very things a “Lone-Ranger Christian” lacks most.