

Can You Be A Christian Without A Church Family?

By Ken Weliever

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“I’m not into organized religion. Can’t I be a good Christian without being a member of a church?” This sentiment of this statement and question is very common. But is it so? Must one be a part of a local church family?

This week I am preaching in a meeting at the Margrave St church in Fort Scott, Kansas. The members of this church family have received me and my wife, Norma Jean, in a very warm and welcoming fashion. I am seeing first hand a church family that enjoys fellowship together both in and out the assembly. They are inviting their friends, welcoming guests, and extending hospitality to one another. But is this necessary? Is it optional? Can one do just as well by being a Christian without a church family?

The New Testament speaks of the organization of the local church with its elders, deacons and members (Phil. 1:1). We are commanded to submit to the leadership of the elders (1 Pet. 5:1-2). How could we do that without being a member of a local church? When you read the letters to local churches like Corinth, Ephesus and Philippi, Paul addresses the relationship and responsibilities of its members in the local church. The Bible teaches through precept, example and implication that a Christian needs to be a part of a local church family.

But why? What is the value? Let me suggest five reasons.

(1) The church family identifies you as a genuine believer. When a person joins the family and submits to the spiritual guidance of the Pastors, there is no question who he or she is. The other members know. And the world knows. We become a witness to the world when we can say I am a part of this fellowship of Believers.

(2) The church family moves you out of isolation. If you become a “floating member” it is easy to become isolated, detached and removed from the “one another” duties enjoined on all Christians. The church family is a place for practicing sympathetic love, sharing unselfish service and participating in philanthropic fellowship.

(3) A church family helps you grow. No one will ever reach their spiritual growth potential by just being a passive spectator. The church family provides opportunities for participation, involvement, and engagement in God’s work. The Bible says, “as each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love” (Eph. 4:16, NLT).

(4) A church family keeps you from backsliding. No one is immune or exempt from the temptation to give up or give in. God commands us, “exhort one another daily...so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness” (Heb. 3:13). That takes place in the church family. We are called to care for each other, watch out for one another and restore those who have slipped. (Gal. 6:1-2).

(5) A church family provides the spiritual protection of godly leaders.

Since we can backslide, God gives us Shepherds to guard, protect and defend us from the wolves. They watch out for our spiritual welfare. (Heb. 13:17). What a great blessing it is to have such men caring for my soul!

The difference between being an attendee and a member is commitment. Friends may visit my home, share a meal with my family and enjoy our hospitality, but they are not committed to my family like I am. Let me encourage those reading ThePreachersWord to find a fellowship of true Believers and become a part of God's Family.

—Ken Weliever, *The Preacherman*