

The Benefits of Church Membership
 Various texts... beginning in Acts 2

PARTICIPATION IN THE "MEANS OF GRACE"—GOD'S WORD AND THE SACRAMENTS

- Acts 2:42: And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching
- 1. The teaching & preaching of God's Word (the Bible)—through faithful instruction.**
 - Col 1:28: And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.
 - 2 Tim 3:16:17: All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- 2. Faithful participation in the sacraments (communion & baptism).**
 - Acts 20:7: On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread...
 - A sacrament is "a visible sign by which God offers His promise of grace in an outward form" (Sproul).
 - Sacraments are intended only to be received & practiced by believers in the context of a local church body.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE—SHEPHERDING BY THE ELDERS & DEACONS

- Heb 13:17: Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.
- 1. There are similarities between discipline in a local congregation and discipline in a family.**
 - Eph 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...
 - Eph 6:4: Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- 2. 'General' discipline and shepherding in the church.**
 - General discipline to grow you in Christ, the Gospel, the Kingdom, the Great Commission.
 - Through Worship & Word, Service, Protection & Correction. "Watch out for..."
 - Mark 6:34: When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.
- 3. 'Special' or specific discipline in shepherding the church. Matt 18:15-17**
 - When a member is dealing with a particular sin, the elders have a spiritual responsibility to shepherd them.
 - To protect them and the body.
 - Heb 12:11: For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
 - Galatians 6:1: Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.
 - Do the elders and deacons fulfill their responsibilities perfectly? No. Some even abuse their authority.
 - Matt 7:15: Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS

- 1. A new family identity that overtakes our family of origin.**
 - Psalm 68:5-6: A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God makes a home for the lonely.
 - Timothy, my son... 1 Tim 1:2, 18
- 2. A community to care and be cared for. "one another-ing"**
 - Be devoted to one another, give preference to, love, forgive, have the same mind as, accept, build up, admonish, fellowship with...
- 3. A community in which to use your God-given gifts.**
 - 1 Peter 4:10: As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace
- 4. A community that will last for eternity—and unlike anything the world has to offer.**