

Unified Partnership Conviction

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 June 2025

Preacher: Josh Christophersen

[0 : 00] Today I want to talk about unified partnership conviction.! It's a more consumeristic mindset.

Basically, you get a membership in something, and then what do I get? As opposed to a partnership, it evokes more of a context of what do I give? How do we do this together? And so we believe that's what the church is supposed to be, and we believe that that's what actually, when the Bible talks about membership, that's what it's meaning. So here at Christ Church, partnership is how we do church membership.

We believe in church membership. We believe it's important. But one of the questions I guess I want to ask you this morning is, how important is church membership or partnership? Does it really matter? And what do you believe about whether it matters or not? And does it matter what you believe about whether it matters or not? I think it does.

[1 : 17] I think it's really important about what you believe about it. And I think there's probably typically three kind of dispositions towards partnership. I'd love you to think about what your disposition is.

You're either neutral about partnership, church membership. It's kind of like, yeah, you know, that's cool. They want to do that. They can do that. Or maybe you're embarrassed by church membership or church partnership.

Maybe you're a part of the church. You think, yeah, sometimes I don't like talking about it. I get a little embarrassed to talk about it. I'm not really sure why we do it. I'm not really totally keen on the whole deal.

It's kind of a little bit uncomfortable for me when people ask about it. I'm kind of more embarrassed by it. I get it. I see that we need it. But I'm not like super confident or convicted by it. And then third would be that you are convicted by it.

You're saying, no, I'm not neutral on it. I'm not embarrassed by it. I'm actually convicted of the necessity of church membership, of what we call partnership.

[2 : 19] And I don't just adhere to it, submit to it. I want to be an evangelist of it because of its importance biblically and its importance in the life of our church.

So those would be kind of three dispositions I would see regarding partnership. I'd ask you to think, what's yours? What would be your disposition towards church membership or what we call partnership?

A little backdrop to why I think this is something you should be convicted of, why I think it's something that is really important for us as a church. I would go as far as to say that our partnership is really one of the most important things for the health of our church.

I want to explain why. But the first would be that to build anything, you must be able to count on the parts that make up the whole to do their part.

Okay? To build anything, you must be able to count on the parts that make up the whole. You must be able to count on them to do their part. All right? So if you're going to build a good business, you must be able to count on the employees to do their part.

[3 : 23] If you're going to build a sports team, then you must be able to count on your players to do their part. If you're going to build a sturdy house, you must be able to count on the materials in your house to do their part.

I mean, just imagine if the nails didn't do their part. Imagine if all the nails dissolved in your wood. That'd be rough, right? You think, just those little things, is that really a big deal? But if all the nails dissolved in your house, yeah, you're in trouble.

For anybody who's ever built a deck with treated lumber without galvanized nails, you know what I'm talking about. Which I didn't do that, but I've heard of people that know. So to build a sturdy house, you must be able to count on all the materials to do their part. In other words, you want them to do their part so the house stays up, right? So you can count on it. To build a healthy body, right? We call people who do that bodybuilders, right? To build a healthy body, you must be able to count on all your members to do their part. Someone who's not healthy, we call that handicap. Well, why do we call a person handicapped? Because one of their parts isn't doing what it's supposed to or it's actually missing, right?

[4 : 31] Like maybe they're bound in a wheelchair because their legs aren't doing their part or maybe they don't have legs, okay? Or, you know, that person's unhealthy because their heart isn't doing their part or their lungs aren't doing their part or maybe their brain isn't doing their part. You see what I'm saying? We would say that's not a healthy body. I need to be able, my body, I need to count on all the parts. Like when I take a step, I need to be able to count on my toes to give me balance or I'm falling over, you know?

I need to count on my arteries to pump that blood and to not get clogged up or I'm not going to be healthy, right? I'm counting on all these parts to do their work, both the ones you see and are obvious and the ones you don't see, which are no less important, like my brain and my heart and those kind of things that you don't see.

Those are important, right? To build a healthy body, you must be able to count on all your members to do their part. And consequently, to build a healthy church, you must be able to count on a specific group of people to do their part as well, okay?

If you're trying to build a church that doesn't have a specific group of people that you can count on, do you really have a church? I would argue no. Well, you might have a building.

[5 : 44] You might have the steeple. You might look inside and, you know, find all the people. But that's not necessarily what the Bible says is a church. That's not necessarily a church that's really going to build you up and benefit a lost world.

It'll just be a religious experience. It'll be a service maybe, maybe even some encouragement, whatever. But it's not ultimately what Jesus Christ died for.

We have to have a specific group of people that can be counted on in order to have a healthy church. And could it be that maybe in your past that maybe some of you were a part of an unhealthy church at one point in time?

Think about it. What was unhealthy about it? In many ways, most unhealthy churches are a group of people where there's not a specific group of people within that group of people that can be counted on.

And because of that, it ends up being unhealthy. Ends up where people aren't doing their part. And then the church is disjointed, unhealthy.

[6 : 48] And you think, this isn't working. It's not growing. It's not helping. It's not God glorifying. This is not what we're after.

Not to mention, I think you'd all agree, church is costly. It takes a lot of work. Why would you give a lot of work to something that's not going to last? That's not going to actually truly build up.

That's not going to actually truly be God glorifying. We need to have a church that consists of a group of people that can be counted on. Because each person affects the other person.

1 Corinthians 12, 26 says, when one part suffers, all suffer together. So it really comes down to, do you believe that that statement is true?

I believe it's true because it's the Bible. John 17, 17 says, your word is truth. So I take all of it and say, yeah, Bible, truth, synonymous. And it's easy to say, I agree with that.

[7 : 45] Yeah, of course, I believe the Bible is true. I'm a Christian. I believe that in my life. But do you believe it in practice? Do you believe that if one part suffers, we all suffer? If you believe that, then we want people in our church not to be suffering.

We want them to be healthy so that the whole body is healthy. And so doing things, building in such a way as to bring the most health is going to affect everybody.

Because when there's people who aren't healthy, it's not like only they suffer. Very important point here. Let me say that again. When you're in a group of people that is called a church and there's people who are unhealthy, they're not the only ones suffering for that.

They are. But we all suffer for that. We all suffer for that. But when we're all healthy and we're all doing our part, then the body builds itself up in love, the Bible says.

Okay? Okay? So 1 Corinthians 12, 26. Very important when we think about church. If one part suffers, all suffer. This kind of flies in the face of the whole, yeah, you know, my sin, it only affects me.

[8 : 51] It doesn't affect anybody else. My discouragement only affects me. It doesn't affect anyone else. My lack of participation only affects me. It doesn't affect anyone else. My lack of conviction only affects me. It doesn't affect anyone else.

My not showing up to this, that, or the other. It only affects me, not everyone else. And this verse just spits in the face of that. If one part suffers, we all suffer. And that's just a totally wrong view of the body.

It's a totally wrong view of the church. It comes from this weird religious view that all church is, is you just showing up at a service once a week, maybe twice a week. Where did we even get this idea?

You don't find that in the Bible. But that's what church has become. And we're saying as a church, we will not stand for that. We're not okay with that. We have to have a church that is based on people we can count on.

Otherwise, it's not a church. It's just a, we might as well go to, I'm going to struggle for examples here, but some other worldly thing that gets together and does positive things with each other.

[9 : 55] Okay? Whatever group that may be. Sorry, I don't have an example of that one. But in some ways, that's what the church has become. It's like, it's just this kind of positive pep talk, you know? Come to TED Talk Sunday and hear some positive, encouraging words.

And it's like, is that really what this is all about? I just, give me a, you know, little shot in the arm so I can get through my miserable life? I'm like, no. That's not what it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be a people that we can count on.

Okay? If you have to be able to count on the parts that make up the whole to do their part, then that means that we need to be careful how we build. Especially when building a new church.

Okay? If each part needs to be counted on, then we have to be careful how we build them together. 1 Corinthians 3, 9-15 says, We are God's fellow workers.

You are God's field. God's building. This is Paul talking, okay? As an apostle, he says, According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation and someone else is building upon it.

[10 : 59] And then he says, Let each one take care how he builds upon it. All right? Let each one take care how he builds upon it. Stop there for a second. So many times, churches don't do this.

They don't take care how they build. It's like anyone and everyone can just be a part of it on their own terms. They can do what they want, when they want, how they want, the way they want.

That's what we do. That's church. Church. No, that's not church. That's not church. If we do that, we won't have a body. We'll have a group of people in a room, but we won't have a body.

And when we talk about church, some people say, well, the church means assembly. I'd say, yeah, I agree. So does that mean you just assemble a bunch of people in a room?

Is that an assembly? Well, you tell me. If you put all the parts of a plane in a room and they're just in a big pile, is that a plane? No. No. They have to be assembled. They have to be put together.

[12 : 02] And we've decided to put a, you know, you ever buy something on the side of the box that says no assembly required? We've made the church that way. No assembly required. You think, no, we assemble.

We show up every Sunday morning. No, no, no. I'm not talking about that assembly and neither is the Bible. The Bible isn't just talking about gathering random parts together in a room. That ain't going to fly, so to speak.

The parts of the plane have to be put together so they're a plane. No one would look at a pile of plane parts and say, wow, look at that plane. That's not a plane, man. That's just a pile of parts. No, no, no.

That's a plane. I remember my brother-in-law's building a house next to me. And before he got started, he had all the parts, because it's a barn dominium, so it's a metal building. He had all the parts of the metal building delivered and sat in my yard for a while.

Over there in the corner. And it was there for a while, so a lot of people saw it. Not one time did anyone ever say, wow, that's cool.

[13:01] Kurt's house is over there. No one called it Kurt's house. But in fact, it was Kurt's house. But why didn't they say that? Because at the moment, it was just a bunch of parts in a pile.

Even though it was all the parts for the house, what needed to be done? They needed to be assembled. Well, eventually some guys came along and they assembled those parts. Now people look over there and they say, they don't refer to it a bunch of parts.

They say, oh, how's Kurt's house coming along? Because now it's assembled. Okay, so in the same way, this is why Paul says, as a skilled master builder, which just side note, there are people in the church who are skilled master builder.

They're builders. They're called apostles. This is their job in the church. They're not some weird charismatic CEO that is a CEO over multiple churches and wears weird name tags and has preferential treatment and preferred parking in front of the church and this weird kind of stuff that happens in that world.

No, they're unassuming parental people who have an ability to build the church. Okay? And we should take care of how we build the church. And not just the apostolic workers, but the team of people that's working with them to say, hey, this has to be built in a certain way and it has to be built together.

[14:19] It has to be built with the right materials. We can't just, you know, do it. We can't just let everybody do it on their own terms. No one can lay a foundation. This is verse 11, 1 Corinthians 3, verse 11, keeping going here.

Let each one take care how he builds upon it. Four. So he's saying the reason you have to take care is because no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, two different groups, okay, gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest for the day will disclose it.

Because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

See, we can't just build with anyone in any way. We need specific expectations on a specific group of people so that what we build is healthy and sustainable.

Okay? Now, you might say, after me saying that, you might say, that feels like we're excluding people. And I would say, yes.

[15:41] Not excluding people from the life of our church, but excluding people based on certain commitments that need to be made so that we can be a people that can be counted on.

So I say, yes, but it's unto something. Exclusion in order to create healthy, loving inclusion. Exclusion in order to create healthy, loving inclusion.

Having specific things we require of members and partners is so that we have something to include people into, which is very loving. If we don't have anything to include people into, then what are we doing?

Again, are we just showing up on a Sunday morning and hear a little pep talk? No, thanks. I'd rather sit at home in the comfort of my own home and watch a TED Talk. I don't need to come to a building and wake up early and pray to a God I can't see.

But if we're praying to the real God, and he causes people to come together in the foolishness of all our differences, but uniting around things that God says are important, and we do say, yes, there are specific commitments that need to be made in order to create a loving inclusion of people.

[16:58] Because if we include everyone on their terms, then we create something that no one desires to be a part of. That's an important point. If we include everyone on their terms, basically we submit to anyone who would come in and has terms that they're going to join us on.

And we empower them, then we create something that no one wants to be a part of, and we lose it all. And I think, oh, but we included everyone. But you included everyone into nothing.

Does that make sense? It's like, oh, we have this great inclusion, but it's inclusion into nothing.

Don't worry, I'll try to talk over the rain. Okay? If we only include certain people on God's terms, then we build something that people desire to be a part of, because what we build builds other people up.

Builds other people up, which is very important. So the question is, do churches have the right to require certain things of their members? I would say there's actually a better question.

Do churches have the responsibility to require certain things from their members? Not just the right, the responsibility. Yes, if they're going to love for people and care for people.

[18:12] Because everyone says, I want community. Am I right on this? I mean, I don't know about you, I hear it all the time. Especially over the last 13 years, 14 years, almost every single person I've seen coming into the church, you ask them, like, what are you looking for?

What's kind of your heart? They all say the same thing. I want community. Okay? I want community. But there's a really important point to be made in this. When people say they want community, there is no community without responsibility and accountability.

It doesn't exist. It's a unicorn. Okay? There is no community without responsibility and accountability. So people say, I want community. My question to them is, do you?

Do you really? Yeah, I want community. Well, you don't want community if you don't want responsibility and accountability. You can't have one without the other.

And basically, what people are really saying is, I want community without responsibility and without accountability. And that's basically saying, I want something that doesn't exist. I want something that's not real.

[19:20] I want this weird unicorn. And you're going to give it to me because you have a responsibility to give it to me and I have a right to it. And my answer to that is, no, you don't. No, you don't.

And we don't have to kowtow to that. And we won't. And the reason we won't is not because we're some hyper-religious, religious, condescending zealots. It's because we actually care for people. And if I care for someone who says they want community but only wants it on their own terms, I'm going to tell them that they can't. You might say, oh, that's not very loving to say no to them. No, sometimes no is the most loving thing you can say. Especially if they have this foolish, erroneous belief that they can have true community without responsibility, without commitment, and without accountability to that commitment.

That's not loving to let them think that. That's not loving to not say no to them. You might say, but that no might exclude them. Yes, unto love so that we have something to include them in.

[20:21] Yes. Because at the end of the day, a lot of times people who say they want that don't really want it. They want a mirage. They want something created in their mind that is not real in real life.

And we have to be the mayors of Realville and say, no, that is not an option. That's not an option. If church leaders don't require responsibility and accountability, then church leaders don't have any community to offer to people.

Church leaders do have the right and the responsibility to require certain things from their members in order to pay careful attention to all the flock. Acts 20, 28.

And to care for the church of God. Both quotes from Acts 20, 28. To pay careful attention to all the flock and to care for the church of God. These are things that church leaders should do. And they can only do that if they're going to require of them a certain level of responsibility and accountability to that responsibility.

Having a group of people we can count on to do their part is the best way to care for all the parts. So my question, I'm saying that this morning. I believe that. I have conviction about that.

[21:29] I'm asking you if you believe that. Do you believe that having a group of people we can count on to do their part is the best way to care for all the parts? I believe it is.

And I've been trying to build it as such for many years now. And I think if we don't all agree on that, if we acquiesce to that in a neutral way, or even in an embarrassed way where it's like, yeah, you know, Josh likes to talk about that, but I don't know.

I'm not really keen on that. I'm kind of even embarrassed that you're asking about it. And, well, yeah, we're not going to have what we could have together, and that is a really healthy church.

So I think it's important that we share conviction on this. And I also think it's important to think about the role of leadership in this. You know, Hebrews 13, 17 says, obey your leaders and submit to them.

Now, if you take that on its head, it's just like, okay. Of course, you'd say that. You're a leader. You're going to quote the obey your leaders verse? Seems a little self-serving.

[22 : 36] Well, yeah, if I didn't read the rest of the verse, let me read the rest of the verse. Obey your leaders and submit to them. For, okay, what is that there for? It's telling us what this obey your leaders and submit to them is there for.

It's there for a certain reason. Why should we obey leaders and submit to them? Because they're keeping watch over your souls as those who have to give an account. So there's a reason why leaders are given authority to build people up and to call people to a unified vision and expectation. Why? Because they're keeping watch over your souls. And not just in a general sense, but in a way that one day God will hold them to account how they paid careful attention to the flock.

So then it says, let them do this with joy and not with groaning. And again, you might say, okay, that's self-serving. Yeah, the leader's telling people, make sure you do this so that I can be filled with joy and not groaning.

It's like, well, no, read the rest of the verse, right? Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for, again, he's giving us the reason here. For that would be of no advantage to you.

[23 : 48] Do you hear that? If leaders are doing leading where it's a constant burden and not a joy, what advantage is that to you? It's not. And I'll tell you what's really a groan for leaders is when we're not unified on the same thing.

We're not one people moving in the same direction. That makes it very difficult to lead a group of people. I would go as far as to say not only difficult, I would say it's impossible.

For all the people who advocate this kind of religious free-for-all in churches, I've never led a church like that, and I don't know how you could. And maybe that's just because I'm ignorant. I'll be open to that.

But I just don't believe it's best. I don't think it's a good advantage to you when that happens. I think when we're all one together going the same direction, that truly is an advantage to you.

It truly is beneficial in building up to you. And you've got to know it's not like leadership can just kind of throw down these edicts when they're having these expectations of people.

[24 : 50] Those leaders who are saying those things need to remember that they are going to be held accountable by God. And what are they going to be accountable for? Keeping watch over souls.

That's a weighty responsibility. I take that seriously. And we should as leaders. So we need people we can count on. In other words, people who are dependable or reliable.

Okay? 2 Timothy 2.2 in the NIV says, And these things that you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Okay? You're looking for reliable people. And really, the people who should be reliable are the members of a church. They should be reliable to be counted on. But to be counted on for what?

It's a great question, right? We're going to talk about them being counted on. What are they counted on for what? Well, a partner is a Christian who can be counted on to be what a Christian is and to do what a Christian does.

[25 : 47] Okay? Hands down, the biggest hindrance to partnership is when people lack the fruit of being a Christian. The biggest hindrance to a church being healthy is when people professing to be Christians don't have the fruit of being a Christian.

And so part of what partnership and membership is, is holding people to be a Christian. Is holding them to be what a Christian is and to do what a Christian does. And some might say, well, yeah, you're asking too much.

Christchurch is asking too much. And to them I'd ask this question. Is your problem with Christchurch or is your problem with Jesus? In other words, is Christchurch asking more than what Jesus is asking of?

Is Christchurch asking things that the Bible is asking? That's what you've got to ask the question.

It's an important question. And we believe that a partner is someone who has moved.

When you think, okay, what is a partner? A partner is someone who's moved from attendance to responsibility. So not just attending a church service, but taking responsibility. We believe a partner is someone who's moved from just observing to participation.

[26 : 54] We believe a partner is someone who moves from consuming, just consuming, to creating value for other people. Okay, if everybody consumed, then no one would get anything. If people are coming to create value, then we all benefit.

So we believe a partner is someone who's moved from just consuming to creating value for other people. We believe a partner is someone who's moved from primarily receiving to being an intentional giver or from helping, just helping to taking ownership.

You might even say partner could be referred to as a part owner. Okay, so you're moving from, I'm not just a helper. I'm not just someone who kind of lends a hand every once in a while. I'm a part owner. Like I own the vision and mission of the church.

I own the fruition of this church because I care about God, most importantly, and I care about the people who are lost and the people who are part of his church.

So in other words, if a partner is someone who's moved from attendance to responsibility, from observing to participation, from consuming to creating value for others, from primarily receiving to being an intentional giver, and from helping to taking ownership, in other words, a partner is a Christian.

[28 : 05] Partnership is expecting of people what Jesus expects of people. Okay? Partnership is expecting of people what Jesus expects of people. And essentially, what does Jesus expect of people?

He expects them to do their part. We see this in 1 Corinthians 12. Okay? Which I've quoted already at the beginning of the message, but we'll look at it a little bit more here. 1 Corinthians 12, multiple times during that chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, uses the phrase part of the body.

Okay? So we're all one body, but each one of us is a part. You, if you're a part of the body of Christ, are a part of the body. Now, you might not be a part of a local church.

By being a Christian, you're automatically a part of the church universal. Okay? But that has no practicality, no natural outflow, unless you're a part of a local church.

Okay? And that's how you express being part of the body. The reality is, if you're a Christian, you are part of the body, but it doesn't find his expression until you're part of a local body.

[29 : 09] Okay? 1 Corinthians 12, 20 says, there are many parts, but one body. Okay? Romans 12, 4 to 5 says, for as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function.

So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. This is where you get that 1 Corinthians 12, 26, one part suffers, we all suffer. It's because we're members of one another.

We affect each other, both positively and negatively. And that can be a very, most people have maybe a visceral, strong belief of how that can affect us negatively, but we don't maybe have vision or have never seen how much that can affect you positively.

When a group of people are committed together and have the same expectations and the same responsibilities, the shared priorities, shared vision, shared mission, shared responsibility, when we share that together, how much the whole is benefited.

Ephesians 4, 16 says, from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

[30 : 16] Okay? So here it says that each part not only has a work, but they have to do their work. Now, if you have this belief about church that we're all part of a body, but you're being part of the body has no responsibility to do anything, you don't understand a body.

My hand is a part of the body, but when my hand doesn't do its part, even though it's part of the body, I'm not just satisfied that.

It's like, yeah, my hand hasn't worked for a couple months, but I mean, at least it's part of the body, right? I mean, that's cool, right? No one says that. Yeah, I can't walk. My leg is broken.

But man, at least it's part of the body, right? It's like, that is so weird. And yet that's what we do in church. We just say, hey, they're a part of the body, right? I mean, we just, it doesn't matter if they're working.

It doesn't matter if they're doing their part. I mean, they're a part of the body. That's the important thing, right? And it's like, yeah, but no. I mean, Ephesians 4 says that the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.

[31 : 36] Each part has to do its work. Okay, so this brings up another thing. It's like, okay, I can't just be a part. I can't just be automatically a part of the body because I've believed on Christ, turned from my sin, and I'm saved by him.

I have to do my part. And this is where the rubber meets the road. People don't like being told what to do. People don't like being told, hey, you got to do a part.

They just want to be a part of something without having to do something. This is what membership has become in our culture. You know, I become a member, now what do I get? Not, I become a member, now what do I do?

Heaven forbid I would ever think that. It's just, I become a member, what do I get? Not, what do I do? But this isn't the way a body works.

This isn't the way the Bible describes things. It says it grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. We have to each do our work. And we have to have a church that expects people to do their work and is specific about what they have to do with their work.

[32 : 38] And if you don't have a church that calls people to a specific work together, then we will not grow and build ourself up in love. You don't have a healthy body. You have a very handicapped body.

In some ways, you kind of have a zombie. What's a zombie? A zombie is like a lifeless body that kind of moves around, but it's pretty freaky, right?

And in many ways, that's a lot of times what the church becomes, this kind of zombified, freaky body that it's just kind of scary. And I don't really know if it's going to hurt me or benefit me.

That's not what it's supposed to be. We need a group of people to build with who we can count on to do the work. We need a group of people that we can build with who we can count on to do the work.

Each partner or part owner are the ones we count on to do the work. And a healthy body is where each part does its work. 2 Corinthians 8.4, Paul refers to a specific group of people and he says, these people were begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

[33 : 49] If you know what the relief of the saints is that he's talking about in this context, he's talking about the favor of being able to give them money. Okay? When was the last time you begged someone for the opportunity to give them money?

No, no, please. Please. Let me relieve the financial strain. You know, that's typically not like something you're begging someone for. You know, it's like, hey, someone is in need.

Well, maybe I can help. But not these people. They were begging them earnestly for the favor of taking part. Again, you see that verbage there? Taking part.

Doing the part to relieve the part of the body that was struggling. They were begging earnestly.

That's the kind of church you want to be a part of. That's the kind of church that's healthy. That's the kind of church that actually is something that people desire to be in.

Okay? People who are earnestly begging for the favor of taking part in the needs of other people.

To meet those needs. To bless in those needs. To benefit and love those needs. Okay?

[34 : 55] Which means, if a church is a body this way, you can't disqualify yourself and you can't disqualify others. Or, in other words, to use the biblical language of 1 Corinthians 12, you can't say, I don't belong, or you can't say someone else doesn't belong.

All right? 1 Corinthians 12, 15-24 says that the foot should say, because I'm not a hand, I do not belong to the body. That would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, because I'm not an eye, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

So if you're saying, you know, I'm not gifted like so-and-so, I don't really belong. Or, I don't really fit into this particular group of people within our church. I don't belong. I just don't belong in this church. And you buy into that narrative and start acting like that, we all lose.

And you might say, well, that's not my problem. They should make me feel like belonging. Yeah, as much as possible, but what if they don't? Is that an excuse for you to say that you don't belong? Are you going to check out?

Are you going to have a pity party in the corner and say I don't belong? And I'm not trying to lessen that and say that that doesn't hurt. It does hurt when you don't feel like you don't belong. I get it. No one wants to feel alone.

[36 : 06] No one wants to feel lonely. No one wants to feel like they don't belong. So please hear me. I'm not minimizing that. That's a painful place to be in. No one wants to be in that place. And no one should want.

I mean, no one should. As much as possible, we should not have people be in that place. But sometimes you find yourself in that place. Or the devil is trying to speak. He's speaking in your ear. You don't belong.

You don't belong. Maybe some in this room have heard that since we've started this church. I don't belong. I don't fit in. I'm not really a part. I'm not like so-and-so.

I'm not into the... I haven't known people as long as some other people. And I'm telling you, resist that temptation. You do belong. And if you buy into the narrative that you don't belong, if you disqualify yourself, we all lose.

We all lose. We need you. We need you. We need your part. And yes, sometimes we could do a better job of making you feel like we need you. But don't buy into that lie.

[37 : 06] Now, the other half of that is... It says that God arranged the members of the body, each one of them as he chose. It's 1 Corinthians 12, 19. If all were a single member, where would the body be?

As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. And then he goes on the other... The flip side of this says that I cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. So sometimes people feel that way because there's other people in the body who are literally saying, I don't need you.

You don't belong. Okay? And maybe that's why they're buying into that. Where it's just like, I like this group of people, but I kind of wish you weren't a part of this group because I don't get along with you as well.

I don't like the way you do things. I don't like your style. I don't like your personality maybe rubs me wrong. Or the way you do ministry isn't the way I like it.

Whatever it may be. Okay? I get along with these people. I don't need you. And that's a lie too. If you believe that and you communicate that and you act like you don't need someone else, and maybe not totally outright you're saying you don't need them, but like in the way you act to them or you're a little cold to them or you're dismissive of them, you're kind of condescending of them.

[38 : 21] Or maybe if you go even as far as speaking ill of them and slandering them. If you're doing that, you're creating an atmosphere, a church that's unhealthy. You're creating a church that's not healthy.

It's, we can't disqualify ourselves and we can't disqualify others. We can't say I don't belong and we also can't say I don't need you. A healthy church says I need you.

I need you. And you need me. And we're going to learn how to figure this out. I want you to feel accepted and loved and beloved and belong. And I also am not going to disqualify myself.

Now, we're not going to, that doesn't mean it's a free for all and that everybody can just come in on their own terms. There's still things, there's still expectations that have to be there. Otherwise, that'll never work.

That'll never happen. Just like in a body, there's specific expectations and rules. Your limbs just can't go rogue. Or this whole thing called a body doesn't work. It's the same thing in the church.

[39 : 27] Okay? Because God has an idea for the body to be equally cared for. Do you know this? It's at the end of 1 Corinthians 12. Verse 24 says God has so composed the body.

So he's saying here, God made the body in a certain way. That's kind of what this verb is meaning, right? God so composed the body. Or another way to say it is, God made the body in a specific way, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it.

Why? So that there may be no division in the body. So that there may be no division in the body.

Sometimes there's division in the body because we're disqualifying ourselves or we're disqualifying other people.

Sometimes there's division in the body because we're not realizing that God is the one who composed the body. And God is composing even the expectations in that body. And by not respecting the fact that God composed the body and brought it together.

And by not respecting the leaders God had put into the church to compose it in a specific way with certain expectations. What we're ending up doing is causing division in the body. And God composed the body in a way that that wouldn't happen.

[40 : 33] That there wouldn't be division in the body. But that the members would have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

That's the way he composed the body is that we would have the same care for one another. Okay? You can't have the same care for one another if we don't have the same expectations on one another. You can't have the same care for one another if we're not going in the same direction together.

It's important for us to have that same care for one another. So in essence, what am I saying partnership is? Saying partnership, a partner is a person who takes part in an activity with another. Or another way to put it would be a partner is one who shares. Okay? When he shares a task with another or one who shares ownership with another. Right? This is why, you know, in businesses we say it's a two-way partnership, four-way partnership, whatever we say.

And that's how the ownership is split up. Okay? Partnership is shared ownership with another person. Or you could say with a part owner. A partner is a part owner. A partner is someone you can count on to share the same priorities, the same vision, and to share the same responsibility.

[41 : 44] Why? Because if you have different priorities, if we have a group of people who have different priorities, then we can't truly partner together. Because if you treasure one thing and I treasure another thing, then our hearts will be going in different directions.

How do I know that? Matthew 6.21 says where your treasure is, what you treasure, what you value, or another way to say it, what you prioritize, there your heart will be also.

Your heart naturally follows what you prioritize or value. So if we don't prioritize or value the same thing, we won't be of one heart. Our hearts will be in all different directions.

And we won't be able to have the same care for one another. Okay? In the same way, if we have different visions of how our priorities are to be fleshed out, then we can't truly partner with one another.

Because we have two visions. Or to use the word that the Bible used, we have division. Di means two. You have two visions. And a house divided against itself can't stand.

[42 : 48] Mark 3.25. And so if one group of people in our church believes we're supposed to go this way, another group of people in our church believes we're supposed to go this way, you think we're going to go the same way?

No. That's division. That's two visions. A church divided against itself, it can't stand. That's Jesus' words. Right? Mark 3.25.

And thirdly, if we have the same priorities, and we even have the same vision of how those priorities are fleshed out, but we don't share responsibility, then we can't partner.

Because if one of us thinks we don't belong or that we don't need each other, then we can't partner because we're alone and partnership is together.

So by very nature, saying you don't need me puts me alone, and me saying I don't need you makes me alone. And the truth is, the language of togetherness is all over the Bible.

[43 : 47] We're to do this together. So it needs to be, our priority needs to be the kingdom of God. It needs to be done in all of life, and it needs to be done together. Amos 3.3 in the New King James says, can two walk together unless they are agreed?

Is this not the reason why so often churches can't do things together, or can't be a healthy church, is because they can't agree on what their priorities are, and what the vision is for how those priorities are fleshed out, and they can't agree on shared responsibility?

Can two walk together unless they are agreed? That's a rhetorical question. The answer is no. They can't. House divided against itself cannot stand. 1 Corinthians 1.10 says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you may be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

So when it comes to our church, Christ's church, our mission is the kingdom of God and all of life together. Okay? Okay? Shared priorities, kingdom of God.

If we share the priority of seeking the kingdom first, because that's what it says, Matthew 6.21. I mean, sorry, Matthew 6.33. If we share the priority, the first priority of seeking the kingdom first together, now we have unity.

[45 : 11] But we can't just share the same priority. It has to be, how is that priority fleshed out? We believe it's fleshed out in all of life. Because the Bible calls us, 1 Corinthians 15.58 is give ourselves always, all right, fully to the work of the Lord.

Always and fully to the work of the Lord. It's an all of life thing. Jesus says, if you don't give up everything, you cannot be my disciple. Luke chapter 14. Okay? So we believe that our mission is

the kingdom of God, that it should be fleshed out in all of life.

The priority is the kingdom of God. The vision of how it gets fleshed out is in all of life. And then we believe that it should be done together. And we should share the responsibility.

It's not just about a bunch of paid professionals. It's not just, you know, the church staff. It's not just, no. It's that we all share responsibility together and then we got something.

A partner is someone we can count on to seek first the kingdom of God in all of life together. Okay? If it's not first, then it's not partnership. If the kingdom isn't first, it's not partnership.

[46 : 18] If you're seeking the kingdom and it's just a part of your life, then it's not partnership.

There needs to be equal buy-in. And if you're seeking it on your own, but not together, then it's not partnership.

Our partners are the ones who are, who are leaders are accountable for leading and who in return are accountable to their leaders for growing and participating in the mission of God.

At the end of the day, our partners are the ones we count on. And if we have a group of people we can count on, we have a church that's going to be healthy. We have a church that's going to be united. And I really believe that united partnership conviction is extremely important for a healthy church experience.

And I'm asking you, are you neutral to this? Are you even embarrassed by this? Or are you convicted of it? And I'm saying, I believe you and I need to be convicted of the need to be one body, partnered together for the sake of the church.

I think we need to be bold in it, in our espousing it and saying, hey, this is how our church is healthy. I think that's going to be key in the long term for us having a healthy church.

[47 : 29] And you might say, well, how do we buy into that? We buy in because we're bought. You buy in because you're bought. 1 Corinthians 6 20 says, you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body.

Your life is not your own. Okay. Your life is not your own. You were bought with a price. So we buy in because we're bought. When you're no longer your own, then you don't fight for your rights. You submit to Jesus.

And when a church is all agreed upon seeking the kingdom of God first, doing it in all of life and doing it together. Now we have something potent. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's stand.