

Why Partnership

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Date: 28 June 2026

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[0 : 00] Today will be the second sermon in our series on partnership.! The series on partnership will be required listening for anyone who wants to become a partner or member of our church.

When I say partnership, we use the word partnership and membership interchangeably here at Christchurch. partnership is how we do membership here at Christchurch. So, how important is partnership or church membership to you?

Does it really matter? What's your disposition towards partnership? Are you neutral about partnership or membership? Are you embarrassed by partnership or membership?

Or are you convinced about partnership or membership? Conviction is the state of being convinced of the benefit of something. And we need people who are convinced of the benefit of partnership.

We need partnership enthusiasts. Those who champion partnership. We need people who are sold on the idea of partnership. So, in light of that, I'm going to talk about 10 reasons to be convinced of the importance of church partnership or membership.

[1 : 05] So, today's message is why partnership? Okay? Number one. Membership is God's idea. Membership is God's idea. 1 Corinthians 12, 27 says, Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

So, that concept of membership, it's not a man-made, made-up thing. We find this in the scriptures. In 1 Corinthians 12, you have this whole section about the church being a body.

And because we're a body, that means the body is made up of members. You are the body of Christ and individually members of it. The best way for people to be sold on an idea is for that idea to actually be God's idea.

And membership is God's idea. So, the church being a body with members is God's idea. That's not a Christ church idea. The interdependence of each member and each member's effect on one another is God's idea.

That's not a Christ church idea. Being careful how you build, that's God's idea. That's not a Christ church idea. Excluding certain people from the church is God's idea.

[2 : 11] That's not a Christ church idea. Holding people accountable and giving people specific responsibility is God's idea. That's not a Christ church idea. Elders, pastors, shepherds, caring for the church, paying careful attention to the flock, and keeping watch over souls is God's idea.

It's not a Christ church idea. Church discipline. You're never going to guess this. God's idea, right? It's not a Christ church idea. Judging the fruit of other believers.

That's God's idea. That's not a Christ church idea. Submission to leaders is God's idea. It's not a Christ church idea. Refreshing people through people is God's idea.

That's not a Christ church idea. And the church being a specific kind of people is God's idea. That's not a Christ church idea. These are God's ideas taken from God's words.

So the question is, are you proud of those things? Are you embarrassed or ashamed of those things? Do we have confidence in the word of God? Mark chapter 8 verse 38 says, whoever is ashamed of me and of my words.

[3 : 20] That's an important thing that it says there. A lot of people think, oh yeah, I don't ever want to be ashamed of Christ. Right? I don't ever want to be ashamed of Jesus and who he is. But it says, not just that.

Mark 8 38 says, whoever is ashamed of me and my words. Sometimes people say, well, I'm not ashamed of Jesus. But we're a little bit embarrassed by the way Jesus talked. We're a little bit embarrassed by the words he actually used.

And he says, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the son of man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his father with the holy

angels. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 15 says, do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

So don't be embarrassed or ashamed of a church being committed to the concept of membership.

This is God's idea from God's word. Okay, so that's the first one. Number two, why partnership?

We must be able to count on the parts. We must be able to count on the parts. 1 Corinthians 12 26 says, if one member suffers, all suffer together.

[4 : 32] One member suffers, all suffer together. Okay, to build anything, you must be able to count on the parts that make up the whole to do their part. All right.

So to build a good sports team, you must be able to count on all your players to do their part. To build a sturdy house, you must be able to count on all the materials to do their part.

To build a good business, you must be able to count on all the employees to do their part. To build a healthy body, you must be able to count on all the members to do their part. And to build a healthy church, you must be able to count on a specific group of people to do their part.

We have to be able to count on the people to do their part. 1 Corinthians 12 multiple times talks about that we are part of the body. And that 1 Corinthians 12, 20 says there are many parts, yet one body.

Romans 12, 4 to 5 says, 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 one of another.

[5 : 38] Ephesians 4, 16 in the NIV 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.

So we want the body to be built up. We want the body to grow and to build itself up in love. Well, how does that get done according to the Bible?

According to the Bible, the way that gets done is that each part is doing its work. That's Ephesians 4, 16. We need a group of people to build with who we can count on to do the work.

Can you be counted on to do the work? Each part or each partner, or another way you could say it would be part owner, are the ones we count on to do the work. A healthy body is one where each part does its work.

In order for the body to be healthy, we have to be able to count on each part. 2 Corinthians 8, 4 expressed this kind of, I think, the right attitude towards this. In 2 Corinthians 8, 4, it says that there were people who begged Paul earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

[6 : 48] Begged to Paul earnestly for the favor of taking part. What is your attitude about taking part? Being your part. Are you begging earnestly for it? Just let me be my part in the body.

Let me do stuff. Let me give. Let me give more. I can't wait to give more. Are you begging earnestly to do your part? Well, they were here. They were here.

Membership is how we effectively mobilize people for mission and discipleship. The church should obviously be mobilizing people, each part doing its work, so that mission happens, and so discipleship happens.

And in order to do that, we have to be able to mobilize people to do their part. One of the hindrances to that is disqualifying yourself or disqualifying others. We also see in 1 Corinthians 12, you see these two phrases, I don't belong or you don't belong, right?

And so one of the ways the body can become handicapped is some of us can say, well, because I'm not so-and-so or so-and-so, I'm not this part of the body or I'm not that part of the body, I don't belong, so we can reject ourselves.

[7 : 52] And when we reject ourselves and we say, my part isn't important, that's a problem. It handicaps the body. So that's the one way. The other side is to say, well, actually, my part's really important.

Yours not so much, right? I belong to the body, but you don't. You're not, your part isn't important.

So we can either say, I don't belong, or we can say, you don't belong, but both of them are going to hinder the body to function the way it's supposed to function.

Membership is God's idea for equal care of one another. 1 Corinthians 12, again, 24-26 says, God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. So don't be embarrassed by requiring each part to do its work.

This is how the body grows and builds itself up in love and has the same care for one another. God is not honored by a handicapped body. Amen? Okay, number three.

[9 : 01] Why partnership? Because we must be careful how we build. We must be careful how we build. If we 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.

Okay? You know, if you're building a house, and you kind of need that thing to stay up, right? You don't want to be laying in your bed and have the ceiling collapse on you.

No one wants that. So you have to be able to count on the materials that you use to do what they were meant to do, to do their part, so to speak. Okay? So you're not just picking any old material. You're picky. You're careful in how you build, and you're careful with what you build. You know, if someone, you know, if Michael says he's got a contractor that you really got to use, you're saying, well, I'm going to find out for sure.

Make sure. This is my house, you know. I'm teasing Michael. Okay? You don't just want anybody building your house. You got to make sure that it's the right guy, right? And then when you get the right guy, you got to make sure is he using the right materials.

[10 : 09] I heard somebody once, they built their whole deck, beautiful deck. They're using treated lumber. It looked awesome. It was great. And when they finished the deck, they realized that all the nails they used were not galvanized.

Well, if you know anything about how nails work, and how treated lumber works, treated lumber is filled with chemicals that will literally eat those non-galvanized nails up so that the nails will just disintegrate.

Well, what happens to a deck when all the nails disintegrate that are holding it together? It's not going to stay up. In other words, materials are important. And this is the same thing with God's church. You see this in 1 Corinthians 3, 9 to 15.

Okay? It says, We are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder, I laid a foundation. Someone else is building upon it.

And then he says this, Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For 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, each one's work will become manifest, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire.

[11 : 19] 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 reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Are we building with the right materials? Gold, silver, precious stones? Or are we building with wood, hay, and stubble? Why are we so careful how we build?

Why are we so specific in what we require? Because we want what we build to survive the fire. We want it to last. We want to build with gold, silver, and precious stones, not with wood, hay, and stubble.

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

Don't be embarrassed by being careful how we build. It's not loving to give someone something that will not last. Did you hear that? That's important. It's not love. There's no love in giving someone something that's not going to last.

[12 : 25] That's not loving. So don't be embarrassed by that. Number four. Why partnership? Okay? Because we must exclude people in order to include people.

Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What's that one all about? Let's take a look. Okay? We must exclude people in order to include people. If we're picky about how we build and who we build with, then that feels like we're excluding people.

Yes. But until what? Exclusion in order to create healthy, loving inclusion. If we include everyone on their terms, then we create something that no one desires to be a part of.

And 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 others up. I want to say that again.

Okay? Exclusion in order to create healthy, loving inclusion. If we include everyone on their terms, on their terms, then we create something that no one desires to be a part of.

[13:33] 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 others up. Okay?

I've witnessed a lot of anger over the years over not accommodating people's different views so they can feel included. Especially those who want community without responsibility or accountability.

Those who want church on their own terms. I've seen people get all upset about this. Thinking that they have a right for us to accommodate all their views and all their terms.

The common mentality is, I have a right to be welcomed into your community on my terms. Not understanding that the terms themselves are what make the community desirable to be welcomed into in the first place.

Do you hear me on that? The terms themselves are what make the community desirable to be welcomed into into the first place. In our church, there are things that everyone is invited to and there are things that some people are not invited to.

[14:38] It's really important to get over your fear of explaining to a newcomer that a meeting is exclusive. There's great value and importance in certain meetings being exclusive and it's really good for people to feel left out of those things.

Where am I getting this from? Acts chapter 5, 12 to 14. It says of the early church, it says they were all together in Solomon's portico. And then it says, none of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes of both men and women. But what's happened now in today's church is we have it backwards. Everyone dares to join the church and not many believers are added to the Lord.

It's backwards. And our effort to include people we end up dumbing down what it means to be a part. And then there's nothing beneficial about being a part, which creates no incentive to be a part. We end up working against ourselves and we have a fear of not including people. People feeling left out in many ways is what gives value to being a part. Because there's something there that is deep and real and committed.

[15:51] When you dilute that, then being a part doesn't mean anything. Exclusion gives the opportunity to include. To exclude no one is to have nothing to include people into.

Letting someone in out of fear of leaving someone out dilutes the potency and power of what you are letting them into, thereby not really loving them.

To love is to guard the whole by not letting people in who are diluted. By protecting the potency of the whole, we love those who are excluded because we now have something of value to offer them that can change their lives for their good and God's glory.

Inclusion without regard for dilution is unloving. We exclude people for the sake of people. This is why we can't have partners just recommending people for partnership just because he's a nice guy who brings good food to potluck dinners or because she's been coming around for a long time and everyone likes her.

They have to have fruit of partnership. So people say, well, I don't want to make it about a checklist. And although the fruit of partnership on the website is not a complete list, it's most definitely a minimum required list.

[17:17] Remember that Jesus was exclusive. In Luke 14, starting verse 25, it says, Now great crowds accompanied him and he turned and said to them, If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. And verse 33 says, Any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

Jesus excluded people from discipleship based on whether or not they believed these things and it fleshed out with specific fruit. So much so that in John chapter 6, in verse 60, when many of the disciples heard Jesus and what he had said, they said this, This is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

One of the problems with the church nowadays is that many people don't listen to what the preacher or the church is saying and come away saying, This is a hard saying.

Who can listen to it? And yet that's what people said about Jesus. So are we making it easier for people than Jesus? Are we lowering the bar below what Jesus had? We should not.

[18 : 37] And we cannot if we're disciples of Jesus. Truly after this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him because it was hard sayings that he said. The early church was exclusive as well.

2 Corinthians 6, 14 says, Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership is righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship is light with darkness? 2 Thessalonians 3, 6 says, Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you receive from us.

Verse 14 says, If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, please take note of that person and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Exclusivity. Titus 3, 10 says, As a person who stirs up division after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him. 1 Corinthians 5, 9-13 says, I wrote you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

But now I'm writing you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler, not even to eat with such a one.

[20 : 05] For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? Wait a second, I thought we're not supposed to judge.

He says, Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside, purge the evil person from among you. So we see here in the scriptures again, God is telling us to look at specific fruit and to exclude certain people.

Romans 16, verse 17 says, I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught. Avoid them.

For such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own appetites and by smooth talk and flattery that deceive the hearts of the naive. One more verse on this.

2 Timothy 3, 1-5. But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness but denying its power.

[21 : 24] Notice, these are the people having the appearance of godliness, probably people professing to be Christians, but denying its power. What does he say to do with these people? Avoid such people.

Avoid such people. I would say you don't be embarrassed to exclude people who want to join on their own terms. The terms themselves are what make the community desirable to be welcomed into.

Everything that people desire to share and to be a part of only exists because we don't just let anyone be a part. Number five, why partnership?

Because there's no community without responsibility and accountability. There's no community without responsibility and accountability. Okay? So many people say, oh, I'm looking for community. I'm looking for community. Great. That's awesome. I think most people are looking for that. But do you want responsibility and accountability? Do churches have the right to require certain things of their members?

[22 : 25] I would say there's a better question. The better question would be, do churches have the responsibility to require certain things from their members? Again, everyone says they want community, but there's no community without responsibility and accountability.

Do you say, I want community? And my question is typically, well, do you? Do you really want community? You want community. You don't want community if you don't want responsibility and accountability.

You can't have one without the other. You can't have one without the others. If a church doesn't require responsibility and accountability, then a church doesn't have any community to offer people. And there's no accountability without judging people's fruit. 1 Corinthians 5, 12, what we read before, is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

Matthew 12, 33 says, a tree is known by its fruit. John 15, verse 8 says, by this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove yourselves to be my disciples.

[23 : 32] Fruit proves discipleship. Never be embarrassed or feel the need to apologize for requiring responsibility and accountability to people looking for community.

There's no other way to give it to them. There's no other way to give it to them. Number six, why partnership? For care, careful attention, keeping watch, and building up.

Church leaders have the right and the responsibility to require certain things from their members in order to pay careful attention to all the flock and to care for the church of God.

This is Acts 20, 28. Okay? People want to be cared for. They want careful attention. They want to be cared for in the church of God. Then church leaders have the right responsibility to require certain things from their members so that this can be done.

Okay? And so that they can keep watch over their souls. Hebrews 13, 13, 17. The Bible goes on to say, let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

[24 : 37] So making it difficult for elders to do this is of no advantage. Making it so that there's no joy in it. So in order for there to be joy in it, there has to be some level of organization. There has to be some means and way for shepherds to be able to shepherd the flock.

And having a group of people we can count on to do their part is also the best way to care for all the parts. Okay? If we have a body that's not healthy, then we know that there's not going to be parts, we know there's going to be parts that aren't cared for.

And that's not okay. Membership lets the elders know who they are responsible for and lets the members know who they are responsible to. Membership is an official recognition of the elders' responsibility to keep watch over a member's soul as those who will have to give an account, an official recognition of a member's responsibility to obey and submit to the elders' authority for building them up.

St. Corinthians 10, verse 8 says, the reason that authority is given is to build up. A lot of people will talk about abuse of authority, which is definitely something that happens. But very rarely do people talk about underuse of authority.

And if authority is given for the building up of the body, to not use that authority is to forfeit the grace that God has given to build up. And that is also a travesty.

[25 : 58] Of course people shouldn't abuse authority. That's wrong. That's not how authority should be used. But sometimes in an effort or because of a trigger reaction to abuse of authority, we recoil at all authority when authority is a gift given by God to build up his church.

So authority must be used. Authority must be used. It's used to give up. And we are against abuse, but we're also against underuse. Our partners are the ones whom elders are accountable for leading and who in return are accountable to elders for growing and participating in the mission of God.

So don't be embarrassed by your leaders using their God-given authority and requiring a lot from people. That's what the Bible calls caring for people. The kind of leadership you should be embarrassed by and apologize for is the kind of leadership that doesn't require what God requires of them because that's a leadership that doesn't care.

That's a leadership that doesn't pay careful attention. And that's a leadership that isn't keeping watch over your soul. And that's not the right kind of leadership. Number seven, why partnership? To be refreshed. To be refreshed. Bilemon 4-7 says, I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints.

[27 : 24] And I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Okay? So I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. He says, he thanks God whenever he even thinks of them.

Okay? What does it mean to be refreshed? What's the definition of refresh? Synonyms of refresh are restore, strengthen, revive, replenish, reinvigorate.

When's the last time you thought of being with the saints doing those things? Okay? The antonym of refresh is exhaust, tire, drain, deplete, weary, wear out, burden.

Okay? A while ago, I heard of a pregnant woman who said to someone that she really wanted to go to the monthly partners meeting because she knew at the time that she'd be missing church gatherings soon after she gives birth and she loves to worship and be with God's people.

[28 : 39] But a lot of times I've also heard people say things quite different from this pregnant woman. They might say something like, I'm staying home because I have so much going on or I'm staying home because I'm exhausted, tired, drained, depleted, weary, worn out, or burdened, which is all the antonyms of refreshed.

People say, that's why I'm staying home. I'm not going to gather with the saints because I'm exhausted, I'm tired, I'm drained, I'm depleted, I'm weary, I'm worn out, I'm burdened. Basically, I'm staying home because I'm not refreshed, right?

Is that fair? I'm staying home because I'm not refreshed. But let me just say, this is important. If you're doing that, you're skipping the wrong thing and you have a fundamental misunderstanding of the church.

Okay? Remember, Philemon 7 said, I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

Do you have a view of the church that when you're tired and weary and broken is actually you're refreshing? There's a worldly experience of church that attends gatherings and meetings out of a religious obligation and deserts them whenever needing refreshment.

[29 : 56] And there's an experience of church that does its best to come together often out of longing to be with one another so that they might be refreshed. Which is the version of church that you see?

Do you see it as some religious obligation that when you're tired and weary you avoid? Or do you see it as something that is a people that you long for to be with so you can be refreshed?

This is the biblical view. Philippians 4.1 says, My brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crown stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved.

You know, you're never going to be refreshed by people that you don't love and long for. But when you do love and long for people it's refreshing to see them. And if you've never experienced church in such a way that when you see people you feel filled up.

You feel ah, it's good to see you. I miss you. Seeing you gets me excited. Seeing you makes me feel rest.

[31 : 00] Seeing you being with you singing with you worshipping with you is a relief. It's a joy. Some of you maybe have never known church that way but I know from experience there is church that way.

There is church that way. And in my experience some of the most refreshing thing I've ever experienced Christ is the body of Christ. And at my lowest times my most weary and discouraged times the people of God putting on the character of Christ have been my most greatest refreshment.

And if you have never experienced that my hope and my longing is that you would because this is the way God meant the church to be. Not just a series of religious obligations that you avoid when you're tired but actually a group of people that are your refreshment.

When you think of refreshments what do you think? That's another word for a drink, right? You take a drink to refresh yourself. I would hope the church would become that to one another. Hebrews 10 24-25 says Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Okay? So that's what it's to be a group of people that are encouraging one another which is why it's so important that the church isn't just a group of people who are gathered on their own terms because if everybody is looking for their own terms and their own desires and their own what I want then no one gets blessed and no one gets refreshed.

[32 : 34] That's a great way to build a church in so much so that it doesn't refresh anybody. And some of us experience church like that. It's about as lame as lame can be and I have zero interest in it and I know you do too.

So let's build a church that refreshes. Well, we believe we do that through partnership. Don't be embarrassed by requiring people to meet together. Don't be embarrassed by what God designed to truly refresh one another.

Number eight. Got three more here. Number eight. Why partnership? Okay? Because the people are the attraction. The people are the attraction.

Some of you have come from or are used to or have only known a form of church where essentially products and services are the main attraction for the church.

What I oftentimes call the holy trinity of church planting. Right? The worship, the child care, and the charismatic preacher. Right? And so, it's like, what draws people to the church?

[33 : 36] Well, it's because, man, that preacher, he's a charismatic guy. He knows how to really speak. He's a great speaker. That worship team is incredible. They're talented. They're a well-oiled machine. And man, have you been to the child care ministry?

It's amazing. The kids love it. It's over the top. And that's what's drawing people. And so, basically, it's products and services that are consumed by the masses. All right?

But, that's not what we're going after. We're not going after products and services provided by a few. We're actually going after a demonstration of the kingdom, the king and the kingdom by all. Okay? Let me say that again. We're not looking for products and services provided by a few. We're looking for a demonstration of the king and the kingdom provided by all. That's what the church should be.

Okay? That's why we need partnership. Because without partnership, you have a few people doing all the work. And instead of participants, you have consumers. A bunch of people coming to get, rather than a bunch of people coming to give.

[34 : 40] Which is why we, at Bella Costa, sending church that sent us out, we used to call membership just membership. And we realized that everyone's view of membership nowadays in our Costco gym membership culture just says you get a membership and it's like, hey, what do I get now?

What do I get? And we're like, no, that's not what we're trying to do here. And so we started using a different biblical word, partnership, to describe our membership because that's really what the Bible is teaching when it's talking about membership.

And that's what we're trying to get across. That actually when you come and become a partner or a member of our church, we're saying, hey, what can I give? How can I lock arms? How can I become a part owner in what's going on here and provide value for people?

And that in and of itself becomes the thing that attracts. We hope to build a church where the people are the attraction because everyone's participating.

quality. It's quality, you know, and the old kind of way of thinking about it, it's the quality of the service versus the quality of the people. At the end of the day, we want to have good quality services on Sunday mornings and whenever we gather.

[35 : 49] But, you know, sometimes some aren't maybe as good as others, but at the end of the day, we can always fall back on the people. We can always fall back on the people. If your service sucks and your people suck, well, then you're in big trouble.

Right? Right? So, but hopefully you're not just relying on the service because the service can go bad. But with people, if Jesus actually lives in a group of people and those group of people are connected to one another in the right way, we should benefit and we should be blessed by the people of God.

Okay? It's also the difference between just meeting-centric Christianity versus all of life where the meetings are what attract people rather than just people in the everyday stuff of life around dining room tables and living room couches and that kind of thing and backyards and front yard porches. It's the difference between gifting and character where gifting is what draws people rather than character and make no mistake, what you build with your gift, you can destroy with your character. And many of us have seen that.

We've experienced that. We don't want to draw people with our giftings. We want to draw people with the character of Jesus. And so, we don't want a couple charismatic superstars to win everybody to our church.

[36 : 58] We want the person of Jesus, Jesus himself, manifested in the body of Christ to be the one that draws people. I was drawn to Jesus in a people.

That's what we want people to say. And this really, when done this way, you avoid hypocrisy because if you have products and services disconnected from character, you very much open yourself up to hypocrisy versus the character and community of a people, if it's the character and

community of the people that are the drawing point, then there's no room for hypocrisy because either God or you don't.

Whereas if you're trying to draw people with products and services disconnected from character, you can have the dog and pony show pull off and not have character and you can draw people and then disillusion them with the fact that there's no character behind your good production.

And that's dangerous. And then when you go church shopping, you can shop for products and services or you can shop for a people to partner with. And that's what we're after. We want anyone who's here who's not a partner, we're saying, don't just shop for products and services.

And at the end of the day, we can't compete with products and services. There's way better churches with better products. But I would hope that where we can, where we do have something to offer, is that there's a quality people and there's a people that you can partner with.

[38 : 18] And that's the goal. One is volunteers on your terms. The other is disciples on God's terms. Okay? John 13, 35 says, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you're in love for one another.

Right? We'll know they are Christians by their love. We want people to be attracted to our church because of the love we have for one another. Well, you can't do that apart from partnership. There has to be commitment to one another in order for there to be love for one another.

So don't be embarrassed by a church that values character over gifting, that aims to attract people to Jesus rather than to a few charismatic superstars. Okay?

Number nine, why partnership? Church discipline. Church discipline. Matthew 18, 15-17 says, if your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault between you and him alone.

When if he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.

[39 : 27] And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. So this is in the Scriptures. This is church discipline. We believe in church discipline.

We exercise church discipline. But there's no church discipline of excluding someone from your church because of the fact that they're not willing to repent of sin if there's nothing that you've ever included them into.

And there's something about that that causes someone to be shaken and it's ultimately unto restoration. We don't do church discipline to put a scarlet letter on someone. Every step of church discipline from the first confrontation to the two people confronting to the telling it to the church, which is an all-hands-on-deck, everybody love and reach out to this person, to even excommunicating a person is all ultimately unto restoration, that their soul might be saved.

Every step of the way. It's not an, it's not, it's exclusion for the sake of love in the end, for restoration, for them to see their need. It's turning them over to Satan so that their soul might be saved.

So that their soul might be saved. That's the goal. That's the goal. All of the goal of church discipline is that. Partnership allows that to be executed. James 5, 19-20 says, My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings them back, let them know that.

[40 : 46] Whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. And that's what we want to do. Don't ever be embarrassed by a church that loves people enough to discipline them.

A church that doesn't hate sin and its power to damn and destroy enough to discipline people is a church that doesn't really love people. Never apologize for loving people the way God says to love.

Number 10. Why partnership? Last one. The indispensability of unity. The indispensability of unity. 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 may be no divisions among you and that you may be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

That's some pretty inclusive language there as far as like, hey, we've got to be together, right? All of you agree, no divisions among you and be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

This is why we do partnership to help foster that, to help build that. Amos 3, 3 in the New King James says, can two walk together unless they're agreed?

[41 : 57] It's a rhetorical question. No, they can't. You can't walk together unless you're agreed. Partnership is saying, hey, we agree on these specific things so we can walk together. Mark 3, 25 says, if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Okay? A house divided against itself cannot stand. It's not just agreement in word, but it's agreement in action. Okay? So, if we have different priorities, then we can't partner. If you treasure one thing and I treasure another, then our hearts will be going in different directions. Matthew 6, 21, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So, if we don't treasure the same things, if we don't have the same priorities, then we'll be going in different directions. Partnership is shared priorities. All right? And if we have different visions of how our priorities flesh out, then we also can't partner with one another because we have two visions or die vision. Die means two. And a house divided can't stand. Partnership is shared vision. Saying we have the same priorities and we have the same vision of how those priorities should be fleshed out. [43 : 06] And it's based on 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. So we have a vision of it being fleshed out always fully in all of life.

Okay? And then lastly, if we have the same priorities and the same vision of how those priorities flesh out, but we don't share responsibility, then we can't truly partner with one another. If one of us thinks that 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. Partnership is shared responsibility. It's not just a few people doing the work. It's everybody doing the work and doing their part. Never be embarrassed to require unity. It's never loving to offer people a house that will not stand. It's never loving to offer people a house that will not stand.

And if you've ever been a part of a church split, you really know this one. I have. Trust me, I don't ever want to give someone a church that's going to split. Now, no one has control over that completely, but being in unity is a good helper for that, right?

[44 : 09] Being in unity is a good helper for that. So, it's never loving to offer people a house that's destined to fall, that's destined to not stand. So, let's be unified together. In conclusion, closing this up, wrap it up.

Partnership conviction, we believe, is extremely important because it's God's idea from God's word. And if we're ashamed of his word, he'll be ashamed of us. Indifference and embarrassment is not an option.

We need all of us to be convicted and convinced of the value and importance of partnership. Amen? Amen. Let's stand.