

## **Review from Sunday's Message for Personal Meditation – January 12, 2014:**

- i. The Lord adds to the church those whom He saves.**
  - a. The church is being built through the proclamation of the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Rom. 1:16-17
  - b. Acts 2:47b “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”
  
- ii. Those whom the Lord adds to *the* invisible church join themselves to a visible local church in some recognized way.**
  - a. Servants and leaders of the church are chosen from within the recognized members. Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3; 1 Peter 5:1-5. (You can't have recognized leaders without a recognized group they are leading.)
  - b. The church was keeping track of its members early on, and had lists of people the church was responsible toward. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1; 1 Tim. 5. (If they knew who the widows were, they also knew who made up the church that was responsible to care for certain widows.)
  - c. The church had the authority and responsibility to affirm members and remove members. 1 Cor. 5; Galatians 6:1-5. (The church is concerned with the testimony of Jesus, the fellowship of the saints, and the faith development of its members.)
  - d. The church had a responsibility to one another – to exercise gifts and build one another up in the faith. Rom. 12:3-21; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11.
  
- iii. To belong to the church without belonging to a church cannot be defended biblically.**
  - a. We typically think of membership in terms of voluntary organizations that we choose to join, or not join. The New Testament assumes that those whom God has joined to Himself, and to the church, become active participants of the church where they live. It's in that context they grow as believers.
  - b. To be joined to *the* church without being joined to a church is like being married without getting married ~ like being grafted into a tree without connecting anywhere.

### **Questions for Reflection, Application and Fellowship:**

- i. Commentator Jonathan Leeman argues that “the local church is the authority on earth that Jesus instituted to officially affirm and give shape to my Christian life and yours.”  
Do you agree with him?
  - a. Is the church an authority in your life? Is the church a “Jesus instituted” authority?
  - b. Does the church affirm your testimony and give shape to your Christian life – or do you think of your Christian life separate from the Church?
  
- ii. How is the church like an embassy – like an outpost of the kingdom of God?
  - a. Does the church represent to the world who the people of God are?
  - b. Does the church have the responsibility of testing and approving false prophets from true prophets?... false professions from true professions? (2 Tim. 2;14-26; 4:1-5; Jude)
  
- iii. How do you learn to bear with one another in love if we are not bound to one another in love? Rom. 15:1-7

Loving one another flows from the reality that we have been loved by God and have been born again into his family. (1 Pet. 1:22-23) By grace, God has made us His people – we now belong. “Once we were not a people, but now we are the people of God.” (1 Pet. 2:10)

If we belong, what might make us hesitate to associate ourselves with a local group of people who are centered on belonging to God through Jesus Christ?