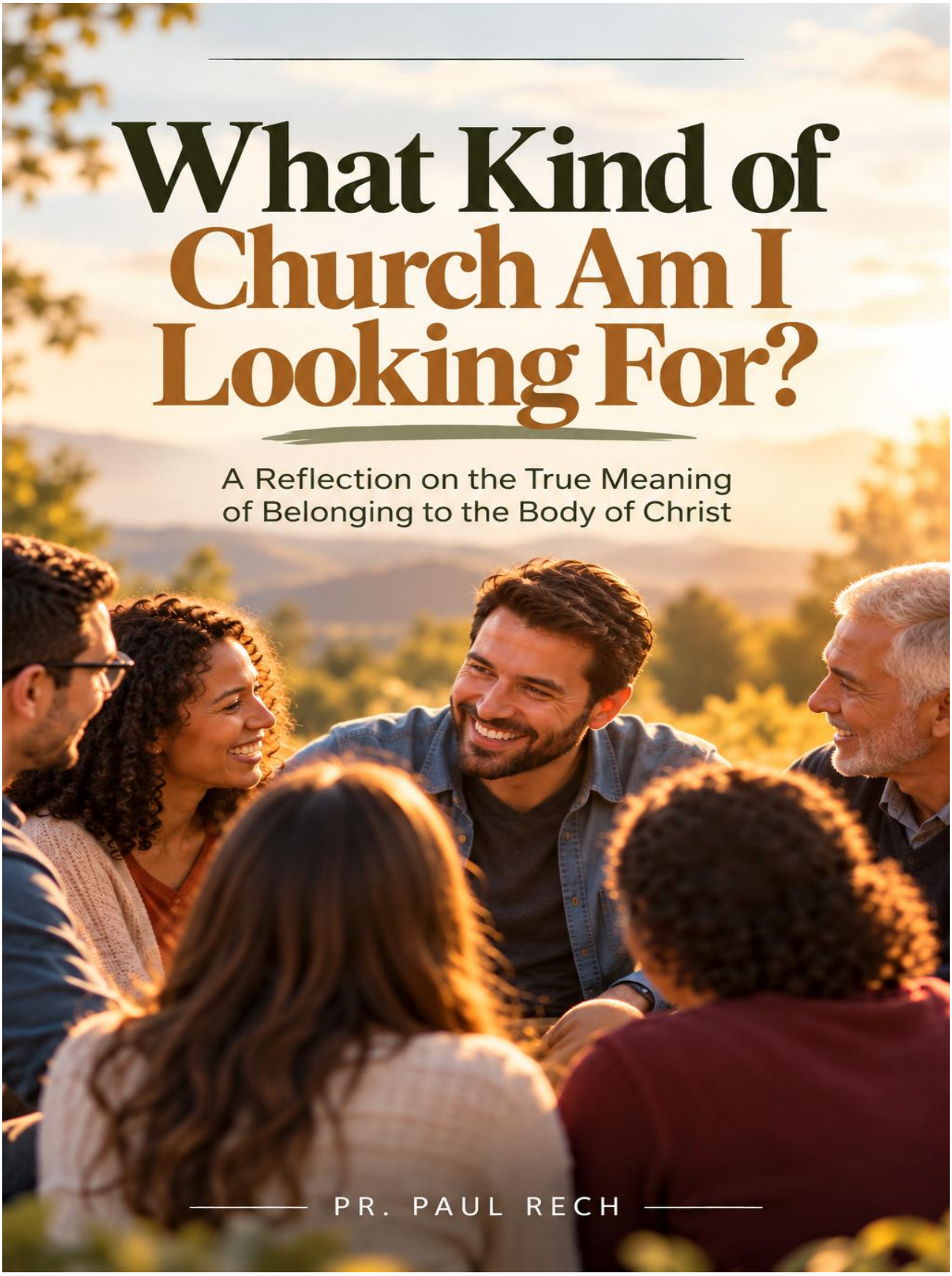

What Kind of Church Am I Looking For?
A Reflection on the True Meaning of Belonging to the Body of Christ
PR. PAUL RECH

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To the dear **brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ**, I offer my sincere thanks for your fellowship, affection, prayers, and countless opportunities to gain experience that the true greatness of the Church lies not in its structure, but in the love and dedication of those who serve one another.

May this reflection help us understand that we were called not merely to belong to the Church, but to **love, care, and serve**, always recognizing that Jesus Christ is the Head and that we are members of His Body.

*"**For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.**"* Romans 11:36.

Pr. Paul Rech

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH AM I LOOKING FOR?

A Reflection on the True Meaning of Belonging to the Body of Christ

*"**Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.**"* 1 Corinthians 12:27

Introduction: Are We Looking for a Church or a Place That Pleases Us?

We live in a society where almost everything revolves around personal preferences. We choose where to live, work, shop, and even whom to associate with based on what best suits our interests. We are accustomed to evaluating services, comparing benefits, and seeking environments that offer us comfort, satisfaction, and convenience.

Unfortunately, this consumer mentality has also influenced the way many people understand the church.

When someone looks for a Christian community, we often hear questions such as:
Is the music to my liking?
Does the preaching match what I want to hear?
Is the atmosphere pleasant?
Are there activities for my family?
Is the schedule convenient?
Are the people friendly?
Does the pastor give me the attention I expect?

None of these questions is necessarily wrong. It is natural to desire a welcoming, spiritually healthy community committed to teaching God's Word. However, when these preferences become the primary criterion for choosing or remaining in a church, we risk completely reversing the biblical meaning of Christian fellowship.

The question we need to ask is not only: What church can meet my needs? More importantly, it is: How can I serve Christ and contribute to the good of the church to which He has called me to belong?

It is important to clarify that when we speak of the church, we are not referring specifically to a denomination, a religious institution, a building, or an administrative organization. We are speaking of the Church as presented in Scripture, the Church established by Jesus Christ, for which He gave His own life, and of which He alone is the Head.

The church is a community of people redeemed by Christ, called to live in fellowship with God and with one another, persevering in the Word, prayer, love, holiness, and the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to them by the Lord.

Jesus did not call us to be consumers of religious experiences. He called us to be disciples, servants, and living members of His Body.

Perhaps one of the greatest changes we need to experience in our Christian walk is to abandon the mentality of constantly asking what the church can do for us and accept the responsibility of asking what we can do, out of love for Christ, for His church.

This change transforms the way we view leadership, relationships, conflicts, responsibilities, and even the meaning of true worship.

1. The Church Belongs to Christ, Not to Us

The first foundation for understanding the true church is found in Jesus' own words: ***"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."*** Matthew 16:18.

Pay careful attention to the expression the Lord used: **"My church."**

Jesus did not say that He would build Peter's church, the apostles' church, a pastor's church, or a particular religious organization's church. He declared that the church belongs to Him.

This truth must stand at the center of our understanding of the Christian life.

The church is not the property of its members, its leaders, or those who contribute financially to its maintenance. It belongs to Jesus Christ, who purchased it with His precious blood.

In Acts 20:28, Paul instructs the elders to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.

This means that no one can claim ownership rights over what belongs exclusively to the Lord.

The apostle Paul also writes: *"**And He is the head of the body, the church.**"* Colossians 1:18.

Here we find one of Scripture's most profound images of the church: a living body whose Head is Christ.

In a human body, the head provides direction and coordination. Its members do not act independently, each establishing its own will as the supreme authority. They must function in harmony for the body to carry out its activities.

Likewise, the church cannot be governed by the individual desires of its members. Its spiritual direction must be subject to the will of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures.

When someone approaches the church intending to impose personal preferences, control decisions, or demand that everything happen according to their wishes, that person assumes a position that does not belong to them.

If I am a member of the Body of Christ, I am not the Head of that Body.

This statement should guide every Christian in their decisions and relationships within the community of faith.

I may have opinions, offer suggestions, express concerns, and responsibly participate in church decisions. However, I must recognize that my preferences are not above Christ's principles or the spiritual well-being of my brothers and sisters.

This applies to pastors and leaders as well. No human authority replaces the authority of Jesus Christ. Biblical leadership does not own the church; it bears responsibility for caring for the flock that belongs to the Lord.

Peter exhorts leaders not to lord it over those entrusted to their care, but to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:2–3).

Therefore, the essential question should not be: Who is in charge of this church? Rather: **Are we truly submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ?**

A church may have excellent facilities, efficient organization, and abundant resources, but if Christ does not occupy the center of its life, it loses sight of its true identity.

2. We Were Not Called to Be Served, but to Serve

One of the greatest contrasts between the world's values and the principles of God's Kingdom is found in how we understand greatness.

In the world, we often regard as great someone who possesses authority, resources, influence, or the ability to determine the behavior of others.

In God's Kingdom, however, Jesus presented a completely different concept.

> *"**Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.**"* Mark 10:43.

Jesus spoke these words in a setting where His disciples were discussing positions of prominence and authority.

James and John had expressed an interest in occupying places of honor beside Christ. The other disciples became indignant, revealing that the struggle for recognition and importance was not limited to those two brothers.

In response, Jesus taught that true greatness consists not in ruling over others, but in serving them.

He concluded: *"**For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"* Mark 10:45.

What an extraordinary example!

The One who possesses all authority in heaven and on earth chose to demonstrate His greatness through service and sacrifice.

If the Son of God Himself came to serve, how can we, His disciples, consider service beneath our position?

The Illustration of the Towel and the Basin

In John 13 we find one of the most moving scenes in Jesus' ministry.

During the Last Supper, the Lord rose from the table, took a towel, poured water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet.

In that culture, washing another person's feet was associated with hospitality and was frequently performed by servants.

The Master, fully aware of His authority and identity, knelt before those men to carry out a humble task.

After washing their feet, Jesus declared: *"**For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.**"* John 13:15.

Jesus was not merely teaching a lesson about humility. He was revealing the nature of Christian service.

A true servant does not have to lose dignity in order to serve. On the contrary, dignity is found precisely in the practice of love.

I believe one of a person's greatest virtues is to possess power and choose to use it for the good of others.

It is relatively easy to demonstrate humility when we have no authority or influence. The real test comes when we are able to demand, direct, control, or impose our will, yet still choose to act with generosity, respect, and love.

A pastor who uses authority to protect and strengthen the flock, a leader who uses talents to develop others, and a member who places personal abilities at the community's disposal all reflect the character of Christ.

In the church, authority should not be an instrument of personal superiority, but a responsibility to care.

Spiritual greatness is measured not by the number of people who serve us, but by our willingness to serve others.

3. Being a Member of the Body Means Living for the Good of the Whole Body

The apostle Paul devotes much of 1 Corinthians 12 to explaining how the church functions as the Body of Christ.

He uses a simple yet extraordinarily profound illustration: the human body.

The body has many members, each with its own characteristics, functions, and responsibilities. Yet all belong to the same organism.

The eye does not perform the ear's function, just as the hand does not do exactly what the feet do. This diversity is not a problem. On the contrary, it is essential to the body's healthy functioning.

Paul writes: *"**For in fact the body is not one member but many.**"*
1 Corinthians 12:14.

This truth has direct applications to church life.

Not everyone is called to preach. Not everyone has musical ability. Some are gifted in teaching, others in administration, counseling, welcoming, visiting, giving, or practical service.

The problem begins when someone considers their role more important than others' roles or begins demanding that the entire community organize itself around their preferences.

Paul states: *"**And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**"* 1 Corinthians 12:26.

The Illustration of an Injured Body

Imagine someone walking and severely injuring a foot.

Immediately, the entire body reacts. The hands try to protect the injured area, the eyes examine the wound, the arms help maintain balance, and the person changes the way they walk.

The body does not say to the foot: That is your problem; solve it yourself.

All the members take part in protecting and helping the suffering member recover.

That is how the church should function.

When a family faces financial hardship, a brother or sister becomes ill, someone experiences an emotional crisis, or a person grows spiritually weak, the Christian community should respond with sensitivity and care.

The church is not a collection of individuals who occasionally meet to attend a religious program. It is a spiritual family whose members are connected to one another in Christ.

This means that my brother's pain should not be met with indifference, and his joy should awaken gratitude rather than envy.

It also means that my decisions must take into account how they will affect the community.

Before insisting on a particular preference, I should ask: Will this build up my brothers and sisters? Will it promote unity? Will it strengthen the church's mission?

Paul gives us a precious principle: *"**Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.**"* 1 Corinthians 10:24.

This recommendation does not erase individuality or mean that personal needs should be ignored. It teaches, however, that Christian life cannot be governed solely by self-interest.

A healthy church consists of people who understand that the spiritual growth of each member contributes to the strengthening of the whole Body.

4. When My Interests Become More Important Than the Church's Mission

One of the most frequent difficulties in community relationships arises when we confuse personal preferences with nonnegotiable spiritual principles.

Certain biblical truths must be preserved. Faithfulness to the Gospel, moral integrity, justice, holiness, and love cannot be sacrificed merely to please people.

Yet many conflicts do not arise from fundamental doctrinal differences, but from secondary matters: musical styles, schedules, customs, working methods, administrative preferences, or expectations of recognition.

In such situations, we must sincerely examine our motives.

Am I defending a biblical principle or simply something I like? Is my concern really for the spiritual health of the church, or for the loss of a position of influence? Am I trying to build unity or win an argument?

Paul instructs: *"**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**"* Philippians 2:3.

In the following verse he adds that we should consider not only our own interests, but also those of others.

This teaching directly confronts individualism.

The Illustration of an Orchestra

Think of a large orchestra made up of dozens of musicians.

Each instrument has its own characteristics. Some produce strong sounds, others gentle ones. Certain instruments take prominence at particular moments, while others quietly sustain the harmony.

Now imagine that every musician decides to play only what they want, ignoring the score and the conductor's direction.

Even if every musician is highly skilled, the result will be confusion.

The problem will not be a lack of talent, but a lack of unity.

The church also brings together people with different temperaments, experiences, abilities, and preferences. This diversity is a treasure when there is submission to Christ and commitment to His Word.

However, when everyone tries to impose their own will, diversity ceases to produce harmony and begins to fuel division.

In the church, Christ is the Head, and His Word establishes the principles by which we must walk.

Christian unity does not require absolute uniformity. We can disagree about secondary matters, express different perspectives, and participate in collective decisions without compromising our brotherly love.

What we must not allow is for our pride to become more important than fellowship.

In Ephesians 4:2–3, Paul commends humility, gentleness, patience, and a willingness to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We need to learn that not every personal preference deserves to become a battle.

Sometimes, giving up something we want demonstrates far greater spiritual maturity than getting our own way.

5. The Church Jesus Desires Is a Community of Love

On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus left His disciples a commandment that should distinguish His followers before the world: *"**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you.**"* John 13:34.

He then declared that their mutual love would be public evidence that they belonged to Him.

Notice that Jesus did not say His disciples would be recognized primarily by the grandeur of their buildings, the excellence of their programs, the number of attendees, or their social influence.

He emphasized love.

And this is not merely a pleasant feeling or a relationship without difficulties.

The love Jesus presents is sacrificial. It seeks the good of others, bears with differences, practices forgiveness, speaks the truth, and accepts responsibility.

The church that truly follows Christ must be a place where people find welcome, but also guidance; understanding, but also commitment to truth; restoration, but also accountability.

Love does not mean agreeing with everything. True Christian love does not ignore sin, injustice, or abuse of authority. It seeks correction and restoration according to the principles of Scripture.

Therefore, willingness to serve must not be confused with submission to harmful practices. A community that belongs to Christ must protect vulnerable people, cultivate transparency, and hold its leaders accountable to the same biblical principles it teaches everyone else.

The Church Described in the Book of Acts

In Acts 2:42–47 we find a remarkable description of the first Christian community in Jerusalem.

The disciples continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.

They shared their resources according to the needs that arose, gathered with gladness, and demonstrated a communal life that bore witness before society.

The text does not portray a community without problems. The book of Acts itself records conflicts, needs, tensions, and administrative difficulties.

Nevertheless, we find an essential principle: those Christians did not understand faith as a merely individual experience.

They belonged to Christ and consequently recognized their responsibility toward one another.

That church did not grow simply because it held meetings. Its shared life expressed the reality of the Gospel it proclaimed.

A church can offer many activities and still lack genuine fellowship. It may have numerous ministries and still allow people to be forgotten.

On the other hand, a simple community with limited resources can demonstrate profound spiritual wealth when its members live in love, prayer, generosity, and service.

The question, therefore, is not simply whether the church has everything we want, but whether we are contributing to its expression of Christ's character.

6. The Church Exists Not Only to Care for Me, but Also to Teach Me to Care

One of the most important characteristics of Christian maturity is the transition from dependence to responsibility.

When a child is born, the child depends on others for almost everything. A child needs to be fed, protected, guided, and cared for.

As the years pass, the child is expected to develop abilities and learn not only to receive but also to contribute.

Something similar happens in spiritual growth.

When someone comes to faith, that person often needs special attention, teaching, guidance, and encouragement. The church has a responsibility to provide this care.

However, the goal of discipleship is not to keep Christians in a permanent state of dependence, but to lead them toward maturity in Christ.

In Ephesians 4:11–16, Paul explains that Christ gave different ministries to the church in order to equip the saints for the work of ministry and build up the Body.

This means that the church's work does not belong exclusively to pastors, deacons, or ministry leaders.

Every member is called to participate in building up the Body of Christ.

Someone who has been taught can learn to teach others. Those who have received comfort can offer comfort. Those who have found a welcome can make room for newcomers. Those who have experienced the community's generosity can develop generous hearts.

Christian growth does not occur merely when we accumulate biblical knowledge, but when that knowledge transforms the way we live.

The Illustration of the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea

An illustration frequently used in Christian life contrasts two bodies of water in the region of Israel.

The Sea of Galilee receives water and also releases it through the Jordan River, sustaining an aquatic environment rich in life.

The Dead Sea, by contrast, receives water but has no natural river outlet. Its high salinity severely limits aquatic life.

Although these characteristics result from geographical and environmental factors, we can use the contrast as a spiritual image.

Christians who only want to receive attention, care, teaching, and benefits, without ever developing a willingness to share and serve, risk living a stagnant spiritual life.

We have been blessed so that we may also become instruments of blessing.

Peter writes: *"**As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**"* 1 Peter 4:10.

The gift we have received is not a personal trophy. It is a spiritual responsibility.

God did not give us abilities so that we could compete for importance within the church, but so that we could contribute to its growth.

A mature community is not one in which a few people do everything while everyone else watches. It is one in which each member, according to their ability, finds opportunities to participate with joy and responsibility.

7. Serving the Church Does Not Mean Placing an Institution Above Christ

As we reflect on our commitment to the church, we need to consider an important caution.

When we say that we should live for the church, we are not advocating blind devotion to a religious structure, nor teaching that an institution has unlimited authority over the lives of its members.

Our first loyalty belongs to Jesus Christ.

It is precisely because we belong to Him that we are called to love and serve His Church.

Jesus also taught that those who desire to follow Him must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

Yet this self-denial must not be used by leaders to demand unconditional obedience, exploit people, or silence legitimate questions.

Spiritual authority must remain subject to the Word of God.

The Christians in Berea, described in Acts 17:11, were commended because they examined the Scriptures to verify the teachings they received.

This teaches us that spiritual maturity does not mean the absence of discernment.

A faithful church must teach its members to think biblically, develop convictions, and act responsibly before God.

Likewise, serving does not mean abandoning one's family, neglecting physical and emotional health, or ignoring personal responsibilities.

Christian dedication must be exercised with wisdom, balance, and love.

The same God who calls us to serve also teaches us to care for those entrusted to us, to rest, and to live wisely.

Therefore, living for the Church of Christ means placing our gifts, resources, time, and willingness at the service of the Lord's purposes, according to our abilities and responsibilities.

It is not a matter of doing everything, but of being available to do what God has entrusted to us.

Nor does it mean that we must remain in a community that abandons the Gospel or tolerates abuse. Faithfulness to Christ may require correction, accountability, and, in certain circumstances, seeking another healthy community.

True commitment to the church must never replace our commitment to the Lord of the church Himself.

8. The Church I Seek Begins With the Christian I Am Willing to Be

Perhaps this is the most challenging point in our reflection.

It is relatively easy to identify shortcomings in a community.

We may notice organizational failures, limitations in leadership, deficiencies in pastoral care, communication problems, and difficulties in relationships.

However, before making a long list of everything we expect from the church, it would be important to examine the contribution we ourselves are making to it.

If I want a welcoming church, am I welcoming those who arrive?

If I want a praying church, do I participate in the community's life of prayer?

If I want a generous church, am I cultivating generosity?

If I hope to find a church where people respect one another, do I treat my brothers and sisters with respect, even when we disagree?

If I want a spiritually strong church, am I cultivating my own fellowship with God?

These questions are not intended to shift responsibility for all the community's shortcomings onto individual members. Leaders remain accountable for their decisions, and everyone should work to correct what needs to change.

Nevertheless, they remind us that the transformation of the church also involves the transformation of every person who participates in it.

The Illustration of Bricks in a Building

Imagine a building made of thousands of bricks.

Each brick has a function. Some occupy visible places, while others remain hidden within the structure. Yet all contribute to the building's stability and integrity.

If a brick could speak, perhaps it would wish to occupy a prominent position, to be admired, or to receive greater recognition.

But a building's safety does not depend on the importance each brick assigns to itself. It depends on how well each brick is integrated into the structure.

Peter uses a similar image when he says that Christians are like living stones being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).

We are not called to remain isolated, seeking personal recognition. We are called to take part in a spiritual building whose foundation is Christ.

In the church, some people will be known for their public activities. Others will serve quietly, without applause.

Some will stand before large congregations. Others will visit the sick, teach children, prepare spaces, offer counseling, or silently intercede for their brothers and sisters.

Before God, the value of service is determined not simply by its visibility, but by the faithfulness and love with which it is performed.

Paul advises: *"**And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.**"* Colossians 3:23.

When we understand this truth, we stop depending constantly on human recognition to find meaning in our service.

Our greatest reward does not lie in receiving praise, but in knowing that we are serving the Lord.

9. What Am I Willing to Offer to the Church of Christ?

We now arrive at a decisive question.

If the church belongs to Christ, if He is the Head, if we are the members, and if we have been called to serve one another, what should our practical attitude be?

In Romans 12:4–10, Paul presents the diversity of Christian gifts and responsibilities, emphasizing the need for brotherly love, dedication, and mutual honor.

This passage teaches us that being part of the church involves more than attending meetings.

It involves commitment.

Commitment to the Word of God, to fellowship, to the mission, to prayer, and to the well-being of our brothers and sisters.

A Christian community needs people who do not merely identify needs, but are willing to participate in meeting them.

It needs Christians who seek not only positions of prominence, but opportunities to serve.

It needs members who recognize their own gifts without belittling the gifts of others.

It needs leaders who exercise authority with humility and brothers and sisters who participate in community life with respect and responsibility.

Above all, it needs people willing to put Christ at the center of everything.

When self-interest becomes greater than the mission, competition arises. When pride dominates relationships, divisions appear. When the pursuit of recognition replaces service, the church begins to lose its spiritual identity.

But when Christ occupies His rightful place, our priorities begin to change.

We no longer ask only who will take care of us, but whom we can care for.

We no longer seek only what we can receive, but also what we can offer.

We no longer see other members as competitors, but as brothers and sisters who share with us the same grace, the same faith, and the same hope.

The church ceases to be a place we attend and becomes a community to which we belong by the grace of God.

And that belonging produces responsibility, dedication, and love.

Final Reflections: From Consumer to Servant, From Spectator to Participant

After reflecting on the teaching of Scripture, we must return to the question that inspired this article:

What kind of church am I looking for?

Am I looking for a church that perfectly matches my preferences, or a community where I can grow spiritually and serve Christ?

Am I looking for people who are always available to help me, or am I also willing to share in the needs of my brothers and sisters?

Do I want to belong to a church where my opinion is always accepted, or am I prepared to listen, learn, cooperate, and, when necessary, set aside personal preferences for the common good?

Am I seeking a position that will bring me recognition, or an opportunity to place my gifts at the service of the Kingdom of God?

These questions must be answered before the Lord with sincerity and humility.

A perfect church, made up of people incapable of making mistakes, will not be found in this life. As long as we walk in this world, we must deal with our limitations, differences, and imperfections.

However, this does not mean that we should accept a church without biblical faithfulness, accountability, or commitment to holiness. We should seek a community truly committed to Christ and participate in building it up.

We should not seek a perfect church simply to enjoy its benefits, but a faithful church where we can grow, contribute, love, and serve.

Jesus Christ will always remain our supreme example.

He possessed all authority, yet washed His disciples' feet.

He was Lord, yet took the position of a servant.

He had no need to win human recognition, yet willingly gave His life for our redemption.

Paul summarizes this attitude in Philippians 2:5: *"**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**"*

This is the attitude that should guide our participation in the church.

We are not the Head. We are members.

We are not owners. We are servants.

We were not called to compete, but to cooperate.

We do not belong to the Body of Christ merely to satisfy our own interests, but to participate, in love, in the fulfillment of the purposes of the One who called us.

The church I seek must be a community where Christ is at the center. But I must recognize that I too have a responsibility to help make that reality visible.

Perhaps the greatest transformation will occur when we stop constantly asking: *"***What does this church have to offer me?***"*

And begin to ask: ***"*Lord, what do You want me to offer to Your Church?*"***

For ultimately, true Christian greatness does not lie in the power we possess, the position we occupy, or the recognition we receive.

It lies in the way we use everything God has entrusted to us to glorify Him and bless others.

The church Jesus desires is not made up of people who demand to be served, but of disciples who, having been reached by His love, have learned to love and serve one another.

And perhaps the most important answer to the question "What kind of church am I looking for?" begins with another, even more personal and profound question:

"What kind of member of the Body of Christ am I willing to be?"

A Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, I recognize that You are the Head of the Church and that we are members of Your Body.

Forgive us for the times when we placed our preferences above Your will, sought recognition instead of service, and allowed pride to harm our fellowship.

Teach us to love Your Church as You love it. Give us humility to serve, wisdom to cooperate, courage to defend the truth, and sensitivity to care for those who suffer.

May our gifts not be instruments of vanity, but expressions of Your grace. May our authority, whenever we receive it, be exercised to protect, strengthen, and bless.

Help us to be not merely attendees at meetings, but disciples committed to Your Word and to the well-being of our brothers and sisters.

And may others recognize through our lives that we truly belong to You.

In Your precious name, Jesus. Amen.

Pr. Paul Rech

Main Biblical References: Matthew 16:18; Mark 10:42–45; Luke 9:23; John 13:1–17, 34–35; Acts 2:42–47; 17:11; 20:28; Romans 12:4–10; 1 Corinthians 10:24; 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:1–16; Philippians 2:1–11; Colossians 1:18; 3:23; 1 Peter 2:5; 4:10; 5:2–3.

Editorial Note: The brief Scripture quotations use traditional English wording, with references provided for consultation and verification in the Bible translation used by the church.