

FAMILY BIBLE HOUR

21 May 2017

“The Compelling Community”
Lesson 3: Community Runs Deep

“We should stop viewing commitment to a local church as a PROCESS and start viewing it as an EVENT. The event is our salvation, and commitment is something that inevitably follows—not something that merely happens as we mature.” (Jamie Dunlop)

1. English pop quiz: Define the terms “consumer” and “provider.”

In a local church setting, ought members to view themselves as consumers or providers? Or both?

2. In the world of consumerism, the customer is always right. Companies (at least in theory) will often bend over backward to address the complaints of its consumers. Should this be the same in the church? How should the church address the complaints of members who are only consumers and not providers?

Comfort-Based Commitment

3. Churches sometimes treat newer members as consumers, hoping that, as they mature, they will become providers. Jamie Dunlop calls this “comfort-based commitment,” and suggests three reasons why this is a faulty mentality. Do you agree or disagree with his assertions? Why?
 - a. Comfort-based commitment, at best, tells half truths about what it means to be a Christian.

“For John [1 John 4:19–21], love between believers isn’t a sign of maturity; it’s a sign of saving faith.... When we attract people as consumers, we fail to tell them the whole truth about what it means to follow Christ.” (Jamie Dunlop)

- b. Comfort-based commitment doesn’t necessarily demonstrate the gospel’s power. When commitment in a local church transcends the benefits we receive from it, it points to something deeper.
- c. Relationships thrive on commitment, while consumerism stifles authentic relationships.

Calling-Based Commitment

Instead of comfort-based commitment, the New Testament exhorts us toward calling based commitment. We commit to other believers in the local church simply because it’s part of God’s calling us into his family. It’s what it means to be a Christian.

“A church built on the commitment of church membership is different. It requires commitment up front: you bind yourself to a group of Christians that, frankly, you don’t actually know that well.... Your commitment to them doesn’t stem from feelings of attachment or comfort or belonging (though I hope those feelings follow). Instead, it’s a commitment you make because doing so is part of following Jesus.” (Jamie Dunlop)

4. The Bible calls believers to commit to one another in the local church in a number of ways. Consider each of these ways in turn and comment on them.
 - a. Love one another deeply and sacrificially (Romans 12:13–16).
 - b. Assemble regularly with one another (Hebrews 10:25).
 - c. Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24).
 - d. Guard one another (Hebrews 3:12–13).

Formalised Commitment

5. Why do you need to sign a people of paper to join the church and love its members? Can you not fulfil God’s plan for meaningful community while remaining an “adherent” of the church but not joining formal membership? Reflect on 1 Corinthians 5:9–13 as you answer this question.

Are there any other New Testament texts or principles you can think of that would point in the direction of formalised church membership?

“Whether examining the Bible’s teaching on church discipline or church leadership, it’s clear that church commitment is a self-conscious decision. Believers know whom they’re committing to; the congregation and its leaders know whom they’re assuming responsibility for.” (Jamie Dunlop)
