A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

How a Church Works

What the New Testament Says



Elders, Deacons, Membership and Choosing a Church

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

How a Church Works

Elders, Deacons, Membership and Choosing a Church

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

How a Church Works: Elders, Deacons, Membership and Choosing a Church

Copyright 2026 by Andrew Dominguez.

I own the copyright to everything in this book. I freely allow anyone to read, copy, print, quote, share, and teach from it, and to hand out or post copies, at no cost, as long as the text is not changed and this notice stays with it.

Publishing this book, meaning releasing it as an edition of your own in print or electronic form, whether sold or given away, requires my written permission first. Requests go to andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

The full text can be read, printed and downloaded free at trinfinityenterprises.com.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), with familiar English forms of personal names, copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez. The complete SLB is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Independently published. First edition, 2026.

Trinfinity Enterprises, Dayton, Nevada.

Questions and corrections: andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com

A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), with familiar English forms of personal names, copyright 2026 Andrew Dominguez. The complete SLB is free to read at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb.

Contents

Before You Begin....1
Chapter 1: What Is the Church?....3
Chapter 2: Jesus Is the Head....6
Chapter 3: Elders: Shepherds of the Flock....9
Chapter 4: Deacons: Servants of the Church....14
Chapter 5: Members: Belonging to a Local Church....17
Chapter 6: Church Discipline: Restoring With Love....20
Chapter 7: Choosing a Healthy Church....24
Chapter 8: Staying Well, and Leaving Well....28
Key Passages....31
For Further Reading....32
About This Book....33

Before You Begin

> *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and **the** gates of Hades will not prevail against it.*
>
> Matthew 16:18 (SLB)

Most of us choose a church the way we choose a restaurant. We try a few, we notice the music and the people and the coffee, and we settle where we feel at home. There is nothing wrong with feeling at home. But the New Testament has a good deal more to say about what a church is, who leads it, what members owe one another, and what to do when things go wrong.

This short book walks through that teaching in plain words. It covers the church itself, the elders who shepherd it, the deacons who serve it, what it means to be a member, how church discipline is meant to work, and how to choose a healthy church or leave one well.

A Word About Differences

Bible-believing churches organize themselves in different ways. Some are led by a board of elders, some by a pastor with the congregation voting, and some by bishops over many churches. Godly people disagree on some of these details. I will point out where the text is plain and where churches differ, and I encourage you to search the Scriptures yourself, the way the Bereans did.

> *Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, who received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures every day **to see** if these things might be so.*
> (Acts 17:11)

How to Use This Book

Each chapter has key Bible passages printed in full, plain teaching and a few questions to think about. You can read it in an afternoon, use it while you look for a church, or work through it with a new members class or small group.

About the Scripture

The Scripture in this book comes from the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB), a word-for-word translation in today's language. Words added in English to make the sense clear are printed in bold italics.

Chapter 1: What Is the Church?

> *And they were steadfastly continuing in the teaching of the apostles and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of the bread and in the prayers.*
>
> Acts 2:42 (SLB)

The word church in the New Testament never means a building. It translates a Greek word for an assembly, a group of people called together. The church is people: those who belong to Jesus Christ by faith.

The Whole Church and the Local Church

The Bible uses the word in two ways. Sometimes it means every believer everywhere, all who belong to Christ. Jesus spoke this way when He said He would build His church. Other times it means a local gathering in one place, like the church in Corinth or the churches of Galatia.

You become part of the whole church the moment you trust Christ. But the New Testament expects every believer to belong to a local church too. Almost every letter in the New Testament was written to a local church or to a leader of one.

What the First Church Did

Right after Pentecost, the first believers in Jerusalem gave us a simple picture of a church. They held to four things: the teaching of the apostles, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers. That is still a good outline.

- **Teaching.** The church is built on the Bible, taught faithfully.
- **Fellowship.** Believers share life, needs and burdens with one another.

- **The breaking of bread.** The church remembers the Lord's death in the Lord's Supper.
- **Prayer.** The church prays together, not just alone.

Pictures of the Church

The Bible gives several pictures to help us understand the church. It is a body, with Christ as the Head and every member needed. It is a family, where believers are brothers and sisters. It is a temple, built of living stones where God dwells by His Spirit. It is a flock, with Christ as the Chief Shepherd. And it is a bride, loved by Christ and waiting for Him.

> *so we, the many, are one body in Christ, and each one members of one another.* (Romans 12:5)

Questions to Think About

1. Why does it matter that the church is people and not a building?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Which of the four things in Acts 2:42 is strongest in your life right now? Which is weakest?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Which picture of the church means the most to you, and why?

Chapter 2: Jesus Is the Head

> *And He is the head of the body, the church; who is **the** beginning, **the** firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He Himself may come to hold first place*
>
> Colossians 1:18 (SLB)

Before we talk about elders, deacons or members, we need to settle who runs the church. The answer is Jesus. He bought the church with His own blood, He builds it, and He is its Head. Every leader in a church is under Him and answers to Him.

Leaders Are Under-Shepherds

Peter called Jesus the Chief Shepherd. That makes every pastor and elder an under-shepherd. They care for a flock that is not theirs. It belongs to God.

> *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has placed you **as** overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased through His own blood.* (Acts 20:28)

This changes how leaders lead and how members follow. A leader who forgets that Christ is the Head starts to treat the church as his own. A member who forgets it starts to treat the church like a club that exists to please him.

Christ Gives Gifts to His Church

Jesus does not leave His church without help. He gives gifted people to equip the rest of the body for ministry.

> *And He Himself gave some **as** apostles, and some **as** prophets, and some **as** evangelists, and some **as***

> *shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for **the** work of ministry, for **the** building up of the body of Christ* (Ephesians 4:11-12)

Notice the goal. Pastors and teachers are not hired to do all the ministry while everyone else watches. They are given to equip the saints, so that every member serves and the whole body grows.

Order Matters to God

Some people think structure in a church is unspiritual. Paul did not. He told the Corinthians that all things should be done properly and in order, and he left Titus in Crete to set things in order and appoint elders. Good order protects the flock and frees people to serve.

> *Let all things be done properly and in order.*
> (1 Corinthians 14:40)

Questions to Think About

1. How would a church look different if everyone remembered that Jesus is the Head?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. According to Ephesians 4:12, whose job is the work of ministry?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Where have you seen good order help a church, or poor order hurt one?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 3: Elders: Shepherds of the Flock

> *shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly, nor for shameful gain but eagerly; nor as exercising lordship over the portions* ***allotted to you****, but becoming examples to the flock.*
>
> 1 Peter 5:2-3 (SLB)

The New Testament uses three words for the same group of church leaders. They are called elders, which points to maturity. They are called overseers, which points to their work of watching over the church. And they are called shepherds, which is where we get the word pastor. Paul uses all three for the same men in Acts 20, where he calls the Ephesian elders overseers and tells them to shepherd the church. Peter does the same in 1 Peter 5.

More Than One

In the New Testament, elders are almost always plural. Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church. Paul told Titus to appoint elders in every city. Paul wrote to the overseers and deacons at Philippi. A shared leadership guards against one man becoming a little king, and it spreads the work of shepherding across several men.

> *And having appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* (Acts 14:23)

Many churches have one main pastor who preaches most Sundays. That is not wrong. The New Testament recognizes that

some elders work hard at preaching and teaching. The point is that he should not lead alone or answer to no one.

What an Elder Must Be

Paul gives two lists of qualifications, in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Most of them are about character, not talent. An elder is not the most successful businessman in the church or the best speaker. He is a man whose life shows what it means to follow Christ.

> *Faithful **is** the word: if anyone aspires to **the** office of overseer, he desires a good work. Therefore the overseer must be above reproach, **the** husband of one wife, sober, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not a striker, not greedy for shameful gain, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, managing **his** own household well, having children in submission with all dignity (but if one does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will he take care of **the** church of God?), not a new convert, lest, having been puffed up, he fall into **the** judgment of the devil. And he must also have a good testimony from those outside, so that he may not fall into reproach and **the** snare of the devil.* (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

- ☐ Above reproach: nothing in his life gives a fair reason for an accusation
- ☐ Faithful in marriage: the husband of one wife
- ☐ Sober, self-controlled and respectable
- ☐ Hospitable: his home is open to people
- ☐ Able to teach sound doctrine and correct error
- ☐ Not given to wine, not violent, not quarrelsome
- ☐ Gentle and not a lover of money

☐ Manages his own household well

☐ Not a new convert

☐ A good reputation with outsiders

Titus adds that an elder must hold firmly to the faithful word so he can both encourage people with sound teaching and correct those who contradict it.

> *holding firmly to the faithful word according to the instruction, so that he may be able both to exhort in the sound teaching and to reprove those who contradict.*
> (Titus 1:9)

What Elders Do

- **Teach.** They feed the flock with God's Word and guard it against false teaching.
- **Shepherd.** They know the people, visit the sick, pray for them and care for their souls.
- **Oversee.** They lead the direction of the church and make decisions with prayer.
- **Set an example.** Peter says they lead not by lording it over people but by being examples to the flock.

Where Churches Differ Most churches that follow 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Timothy 3:2 teach that the office of elder or pastor is for qualified men, while women serve in many other vital ways. Some churches read those passages differently. Churches also differ on whether elders are chosen by the congregation, by the other elders or by a wider body. Whatever your church's practice, the character qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are not optional.

How Members Treat Elders

Members are told to respect, support and follow their leaders, and to pray for them. That does not mean blind obedience. Elders can be wrong, and the Bible gives a careful process for handling a charge against one, with two or three witnesses, in 1 Timothy 5:19-20. But a church goes better when its people make the shepherds' work a joy and not a burden.

> *Obey those who lead you and submit **to them**, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account, so that they may do this with joy and not groaning, for this **would be** unprofitable for you.*
> (Hebrews 13:17)

Questions to Think About

1. Why do you think most of an elder's qualifications are about character and not skill?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What are the benefits of having more than one elder?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What is one way you could make your church leaders' work a joy this month?

Chapter 4: Deacons: Servants of the Church

> *For those who have served well acquire for themselves a good standing and great boldness in **the** faith which **is** in Christ Jesus.*
>
> 1 Timothy 3:13 (SLB)

The word deacon simply means servant. Elders are given to shepherd and teach. Deacons are given to serve the practical needs of the church so the shepherding and teaching are not crowded out.

Where Deacons Came From

Most Bible teachers point to Acts 6 as the start of this kind of service. The church in Jerusalem was growing fast, and the widows of the Greek-speaking believers were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The apostles did not ignore the problem, and they did not drop prayer and preaching to fix it themselves. They asked the church to choose seven men to take charge of the need.

> *Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men being well attested, full of **the** Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this need; but we will steadfastly continue in prayer and in the ministry of the word.* (Acts 6:3-4)

The result was that the Word of God kept spreading and the number of disciples grew. Good service set the teachers free and met real needs at the same time.

What a Deacon Must Be

Deacons do not have to be able to teach, but their character must match an elder's in most ways.

> *Deacons likewise **must be** dignified, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for shameful gain, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. And let these also be tested first; then let them serve, being blameless. Women likewise **must be** dignified, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, managing **their** children and **their** own households well.* (1 Timothy 3:8-12)

- ☐ Dignified and worthy of respect
- ☐ Honest: not saying one thing to one person and another to someone else
- ☐ Not given to much wine
- ☐ Not greedy for money
- ☐ Holds the faith with a clear conscience
- ☐ Tested first and found blameless
- ☐ Faithful in marriage and manages his household well

What Deacons Do

The New Testament does not give a full job description, and churches use deacons in different ways. In many churches, deacons care for benevolence and the needy, help with the building and grounds, organize practical ministries, help the elders with visits and care, and handle money with accountability. The common thread is service that lets the church run well and frees the elders to pray and teach.

Where Churches Differ Paul calls Phoebe a servant, or deaconess, of the church at Cenchrea in Romans 16:1, and 1 Timothy 3:11 speaks of women who may be deacons' wives or women deacons. Some churches have women deacons and some do not. Some churches use the word deacon for the main leadership board, which the New Testament calls elders. It helps to ask a church how it uses these words.

Questions to Think About

1. What did the apostles do right in Acts 6 when a problem came up?

_____

_____

_____

2. Why do you think deacons need such strong character, even for practical work?

_____

_____

_____

3. What practical need in your church could you help meet?

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 5: Members: Belonging to a Local Church

> *Now you are **the** body of Christ, and members individually.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:27 (SLB)

Some believers say they love Jesus but do not need a church. The New Testament does not leave that option open. A hand cut off from the body does not stay healthy for long, and a Christian cut off from other believers does not either.

Is Membership in the Bible?

The New Testament does not use the phrase church membership, but the idea is all through it. The early church knew who belonged. Three thousand were added on the day of Pentecost. Widows were put on a list in 1 Timothy 5. Elders were told to shepherd the flock among them, which means they knew who that flock was. Church discipline in 1 Corinthians 5 assumes a clear line between those inside the church and those outside. Formal membership is simply a way of saying, out loud, "I belong here, and I am committing myself to these people."

> *and let us consider one another for stirring up of love and of good works, not forsaking the assembling together of ourselves, as **is the** custom of some, but encouraging **one another**, and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.* (Hebrews 10:24-25)

What a Member Gives

- **Presence.** Showing up regularly, not just when it is convenient.

- **Service.** Every member has gifts to use for the good of the body (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12; 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- **Giving.** Supporting the work of the church with cheerful, planned giving (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
- **Prayer.** For the leaders, the members and the church's mission.
- **Unity.** Working hard to keep the peace, and refusing to gossip.
- **Teachability.** Being willing to be taught, encouraged and corrected.

> *being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3)

What a Member Receives

Membership is not all giving. In a healthy church, members are known, shepherded, prayed for and cared for. They are taught the Word every week. They have people who will notice when they are missing, sit with them in the hospital and stand beside them at a funeral. They have a place to serve that fits their gifts.

I have seen this from both sides. I once led a couples retreat for about ten couples, and I watched God use ordinary church members to strengthen one another's marriages in ways no single pastor could have. That is what Paul meant by the body building itself up in love.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Jesus gave His church two ordinances. Baptism is the first public step of obedience for a new believer, and in most churches it comes before membership. The Lord's Supper is the meal believers share again and again to remember His death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Both are church practices, not private ones. I was baptized on October 19, 1995, and I had the

privilege of baptizing my wife the same day. We did it in front of our church family, and that mattered.

Questions to Think About

1. What would you say to someone who believes in Jesus but does not want to join a church?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Which item on the list of what a member gives is hardest for you?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What gifts has God given you that your church could use?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Chapter 6: Church Discipline: Restoring With Love

> *Brothers, if a man is even caught in some trespass, you who **are** spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, watching yourself, lest you also be tempted.*
>
> Galatians 6:1 (SLB)

Church discipline sounds harsh to many people. But in the Bible its goal is not punishment. Its goal is to win back a brother or sister who is walking away from the Lord, and to protect the church. A church that never deals with open, unrepentant sin is not being loving. It is being careless with souls.

Most Discipline Is Quiet

Most church discipline happens in ordinary friendship. A brother sees another heading the wrong way and gently speaks up. Teaching, encouragement and loving correction are all part of how the church shapes its members. Formal discipline is rare and is the last step, not the first.

The Steps Jesus Gave

Jesus laid out a clear and patient process in Matthew 18.

> *And if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not hear, take with you one or two more, so that by **the** mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell **it** to the church; and if he refuses to hear even the church, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax collector.* (Matthew 18:15-17)

1. **Go privately.** Talk to the person alone. If he listens, the matter ends there, and no one else needs to know.
2. **Take one or two others.** If he will not listen, bring one or two others so that the facts are confirmed and the appeal is stronger.
3. **Tell it to the church.** If he still refuses, the matter goes to the church, usually through its elders, so the whole body can call him back.
4. **Treat him as an outsider.** If he refuses even the church, he is no longer treated as a believer in good standing. This is not hatred. It is the church saying honestly that his life does not match his claim, and praying for him to return.

At every step, the door to repentance stays open. The point is to gain your brother.

What Discipline Is For

Discipline in the church is only for serious, unrepentant sin, the kind Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 5, or for someone stirring up division after being warned (Titus 3:10). It is not for personality conflicts, different opinions on minor matters, or people who are struggling but repenting. Every one of us sins, and the church is a place for sinners who are fighting their sin, not hiding it.

Guard Against Two Errors Some churches never correct anyone, and sin spreads like yeast through the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6). Other churches correct harshly, over small things, without patience or love. Both are wrong. Galatians 6:1 calls for gentleness and humility, because the one correcting could fall too.

When Someone Repents

When a disciplined person repents, the church must welcome him back fully. Paul told the Corinthians to forgive and comfort the man who had been disciplined, so he would not be overwhelmed by sorrow.

> *so that on the contrary you **should** rather forgive and comfort **him**, lest somehow such a one be swallowed up by more abundant grief. Therefore I exhort you to confirm love toward him.* (2 Corinthians 2:7-8)

I know something about this from the inside. I have made choices in my life that hurt the people I love, and pride is my biggest downfall. The people who helped me most were the ones who told me the truth and then stayed. That is what church discipline is supposed to look like.

Questions to Think About

1. Why is church discipline an act of love and not just a rule?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Why do you think Jesus said to start privately?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Has someone ever lovingly corrected you? What did it do for you?

Chapter 7: Choosing a Healthy Church

> *preach the word; be ready in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all patience and instruction.*
>
> 2 Timothy 4:2 (SLB)

No church is perfect, because every church is full of forgiven sinners. If you wait for a perfect church you will never join one, and if you found one, you would spoil it by walking in. The question is not whether a church has problems. The question is whether it is faithful to Christ and His Word, and whether you can grow and serve there.

Start With the Big Things

Some things matter far more than others. Start with these.

- ☐ **The gospel is clear.** Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, and you hear it plainly.
- ☐ **The Bible is the final authority.** The church believes the Bible is God's Word, true in all it says, and the preaching comes out of the text.
- ☐ **The core beliefs are sound.** One God in three Persons; Jesus fully God and fully man; His death for sin, bodily resurrection and coming return.
- ☐ **The leaders are qualified.** The pastors and elders show the character of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and they are accountable to others.
- ☐ **Members are cared for.** There is real fellowship, prayer and shepherding, not just a crowd on Sunday.

- ☐ **Baptism and the Lord's Supper are practiced.**
- ☐ **Sin is taken seriously and handled with grace.**
- ☐ **The church reaches out.** It cares about sharing the gospel near and far.

Then Look at the Rest

After the big things, there are matters of preference and conviction: music style, church size, how formal the service is, the timing of the rapture, how often the Lord's Supper is taken, children's programs, and the like. Some of these matter a good deal to a family, and that is fine. Just do not rule out a faithful church over style, and do not settle for an unfaithful one because you like the band.

Questions to Ask a Pastor

Most pastors are glad to meet with someone who is serious about joining. Here are good questions to ask.

1. What does this church believe about the gospel and the Bible? Do you have a written statement of faith?
2. How is the church led, and who do the leaders answer to?
3. What does membership mean here, and what is expected of members?
4. How do you handle a member who falls into sin?
5. How do you care for members when they are sick, grieving or struggling?
6. Where could someone like me serve?

Warning Signs A leader who answers to no one. Pressure to give money in ways that feel like a sales pitch. Little or no Bible in the preaching. Teaching that you will be healthy and wealthy if you have enough faith. Secrecy about money or decisions. Being told not to ask questions or talk to people who have left. Any of these is a reason to slow down and look closely.

Give It Time

Visit more than once. Go to a small group or Bible study as well as the Sunday service. Read the statement of faith. Pray, and talk it over with your spouse if you are married. Then commit, and give it a real chance. Most of the good things about a church only show up after you have been there long enough to be known.

Questions to Think About

1. Which item on the checklist matters most to you, and why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What preferences have you let weigh too heavily when choosing a church?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Which question would you most want to ask a pastor?

Chapter 8: Staying Well, and Leaving Well

> *if possible, so far as **it is** from you, being at peace with all men*
>
> Romans 12:18 (SLB)

Sooner or later every church member will be hurt, disappointed or frustrated by their church. People will say careless things. Leaders will make decisions you disagree with. A friend will move on. How you handle those moments says a lot about your own walk with the Lord.

Reasons to Stay and Work It Out

Most church problems are not reasons to leave. Disagreements about music, programs, building plans or the color of the carpet are reasons to talk, pray and be patient. Hurt feelings are reasons to go to the person, as Jesus said in Matthew 18, not reasons to vanish. Staying through a hard season, and working it out in love, is one of the ways God grows us.

Good Reasons to Leave

There are times when leaving is right.

- The church has abandoned the gospel or the authority of the Bible.
- Leaders are living in open sin or abusing their position, and the church will not deal with it.
- You have moved, or your family's situation has changed so you cannot take part.
- After honest prayer and conversation with the leaders, you believe God is leading you to serve somewhere else.

If There Is Abuse If a leader or member has abused a child or anyone else, report it to law enforcement. That is not gossip, and it is not a lack of grace. Romans 13 gives the authorities the job of dealing with crime, and the church should support that, not hide it.

How to Leave Well

1. Pray first, and be honest with yourself about your motives.
2. Talk to the elders or pastor before you go. Tell them why, kindly and plainly.
3. Do not take others with you or stir up division on your way out.
4. Do not slander the church afterward. Speak the truth, and leave the rest with the Lord.
5. Join another faithful church soon. Do not drift.

The Church Is Worth It

For all its flaws, the church is the bride of Christ. He loved her and gave Himself up for her. If He is that committed to His church, we can be committed to our local part of it. Find a faithful church, join it, serve it, pray for it, and stay as long as the Lord keeps you there.

> *Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed* ***her*** *by the washing of water by* ***the*** *word, so that He might present her to Himself, the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any of such things, but that she might be holy and blameless.*
> (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Questions to Think About

1. Have you ever left a church? Looking back, did you leave well?

_____

_____

_____

2. Which church frustrations are reasons to stay and work it out?

_____

_____

_____

3. What is one step you can take this week to be a better church member?

_____

_____

_____

Key Passages

Topic	Passages
The church as a body	Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:11-16
Christ the Head	Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18
Elders and overseers	Acts 14:23; 20:17-35; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4
Deacons	Acts 6:1-7; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13
Members and leaders	1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17
Gathering together	Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25
Baptism and the Lord's Supper	Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Church discipline	Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1-2
Unity	John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-4

For Further Reading

For more on church life and fellowship, see my free book Growing Together as the Church at trinfinityenterprises.com.

About This Book

How a Church Works is one of a set of free Christian books from Trinfinity Enterprises. All Scripture quotations come from the Steadfast Literal Bible. Questions or corrections are welcome at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.