

# A Case for Connection

Adapted from  
Falling in Love With the Church  
By Larry McKain

Many people have stated over the last few decades: “Why belong to a denomination? After all, there are no denominations in the Bible.” While that statement may be true, we feel the question comes from a misunderstanding of the calling and purpose of denominational bodies.

In the following pages we hope to build a case for connection in order to help you understand that joining a group of like-minded people is not a hindrance nor is it anti-biblical. Rather, it will enable your church to become a globally minded body of believers that will enable you to fulfill the Great Commission.

The six reasons for connecting to a larger body listed below have been adopted and adapted from Dr. Larry McKain’s book Falling in Love With the Church.

## **1. The Bible teaches Christians to be interdependent not independent.**

Paul’s description of the church is a body. “...*the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the working of the measure of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the edification of itself in love*” (Eph 4:16).

Never in the Scripture will you find a case for being separated from other believers. Jesus prayed that those who follow Him would “...*be one; just as he was one with the Father*” (John 17:21).

We all believe that Christianity is to be lived out within the context of community. There is no such thing as a “lone ranger” Christian. We believe that the Scripture also supports that local churches are to be interdependent of one another not “lone ranger” churches.

The autonomy of the local church, while celebrated, must be kept in context of the larger body of believers. Even though each individual church in the New Testament was different and distinct, it was not by itself. The council in Acts 15 clearly shows us that each church was connected and held accountable. The council acted much like a governing body.

## **2. In the Old Testament, there were no independent Jews; everyone had a tribe.**

The nation of Israel was a prototype of the church. Today’s church is the new Israel. “*After all, who is a real Jew, truly circumcised? It is not the man who is a Jew on the outside, whose circumcision is a physical thing. Rather, the real Jew is the person who is*

*a Jew on the inside, that is, whose heart has been circumcised, and this is the work of God's Spirit, not of the written Law" (Rom 2:28-29).*

We believe that denominational families resemble the tribes of Israel. As you study the history of Israel, you will quickly discover that each tribe was different. Many times they had differences of opinion and sometimes even warred with one another. Yet, all of them were a part of God's chosen people. There were no independent Jews.

**3. The power of being connected to a denominational fellowship is that it provides local churches to do what they could not do on their own.**

We are called as the body of Christ to be a witness for Christ "*...in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). No church is able to accomplish this on its own. Our obedience to this call must not stop with our local area. God has called us to be globally minded as well.

Ministry in the local area is expensive. At best, most local churches are able to reach Jerusalem and Judea. Being connected enables the local church to more fully fulfill the Great Commission and become an Acts 1:8 church. As local churches cooperate with other churches, the ability to do work for the Kingdom greatly increases. The local churches' global potential for reaching across social, economical, and ethnic barriers can be experienced only when we join together. Together we can do what no local church can do alone.

**4. People in denominational families can walk hand-in-hand without seeing eye-to-eye.**

Paul wrote to the Philippians, "*If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies, then fulfill my joy, that you may be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord and of one mind*" (Phil 2:1-2).

To be in "one accord" does not mean that we see eye-to-eye on everything. To be in "one accord" means that we are extending our hand of fellowship to each other in order to accomplish the task that God has called us to do.

You don't have to read very far in the New Testament Book of Acts to see that differences existed between very godly men. Paul and Barnabas didn't see eye-to-eye on using Mark. Peter and Paul struggled with viewpoints about who is a Jew. The council in Acts dealt with differences between Gentile and Jewish believers. While these differences existed, they were still all in one accord.

Two great men of church history, John Wesley and George Whitfield, didn't see eye-to-eye on theological issues. Wesley said to Whitfield one day, "Is your heart one with my heart? Then give me your hand" (2 Kings 10:15-16).

Where we must always see eye-to-eye is on the essentials.

In essential beliefs we have unity.  
In non-essential beliefs we have liberty.  
In all our beliefs, we show love and mercy.

## **5. Jesus is present in imperfect local churches and denominational families.**

I'm sure every one of us has heard people make negative comments about the imperfections of the local church. The problems many churches face are the main reasons many people stay outside the churches and denominations. There are literally millions of people who don't like the idea of the church, let alone denominations.

God told Hosea, “*Go and get married; your wife will be unfaithful, and your children will be just like her. In the same way my people have left me and become unfaithful.*’ So Hosea married a woman named Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim” (Hosea 1:2-3).

I think we all understand that God is calling Israel His bride, much like the church today. The church is seen as the bride of Christ in the New Testament.

God's point is this: Israel or the church is my bride; I love her; she is mine in spite of all her problems and imperfections, and they are many. But I love her. Listen to how Jesus speaks of the church. “*Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness*” (Eph 5:25-27).

God asked Hosea to marry a prostitute. Why would anyone subject himself to a relationship that had so much trouble attached to it? Why would God ask Hosea to marry such a tarnished and imperfect person? Because this is the way Jesus loves the church, even with all of its problems and discord.

Why does Jesus love the church this way? Because in spite of all the human trappings and problems of the local church and denominational families, they are God's chosen means of bringing blessing and salvation to a desperate world.

No church is perfect, nor is any denomination. As long as we live in this imperfect world, we will deal with imperfect systems. The good news is that God works through these imperfect systems in spite of all the problems.

## **6. Denominational families offer fellowship and accountability.**

We all need each other. This world stands against all we proclaim, and according to God's Word it will get worse as the end draws near. That is why the writer of Hebrews said, “*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us*

*encourage one another all the more, since you see that the Day of the Lord is coming nearer” (Heb 10:25).*

Fifty-eight times in the Bible it uses the phrase “one another.” It says, “Love one another, care for one another...Greet one another...Encourage one another...Pray for one another...Counsel one another...Share with one another... Help one another....” It is the mutual ministry of the body to itself. There can be no doubt about it, we need each other.