



Kyle's sermon opened the discussion on church membership, focusing primarily on how New Testament writers addressed it. He began explaining that Metaphors are a figure of speech that implicitly compare two unrelated things, typically by stating that one thing is another. He went on to say that Scripture is packed with metaphors, and much of Jesus' own teaching employed metaphors as a way of helping us conceptualize his teaching.

Here are a few metaphors that Kyle listed:

The Church is...

Christians are...

An Embassy
 A Body
 God's Family
 A Temple
 God's Flock

Ambassadors
 Body parts / members
 Brothers and Sisters
 Stones
 Sheep

Throughout the bible, the church is described through powerful metaphors. These metaphors invite us, as the church, to reflect on important questions about our roles and relationships within it.

Starter:

- What questions do these metaphors encourage Christians to ask about their roles and relationships within the church?
- What do these metaphors illustrate about the relationship between the church and God?
- When you walk into a church, what should you hear and see?

Digging Deeper:

The Church is an Embassy

The definition of an embassy is an outpost of a home nation inside of a host nation. It's a place where you can go to have your citizenship affirmed.

When Peter made his confession, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Matthew 16:16

It's as if he was saying that “the King has come” – there is a rebel force that is now occupying the world. A force that has come to represent heaven on earth. Not only through Peter's confession, but the apostles and all who would make this confession. The Church has been given the authority to be heaven's embassy on earth.

- What does it mean to live as an ambassador of heaven on earth?
- What authority did Jesus give the church?
- How does the church affirm a believer's spiritual citizenship?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- How does being a “new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) shape our role as ambassadors of heaven?
- What is the mission of the church as an ambassador of Christ?
- What is the ministry of reconciliation mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:18, and how does it relate to the church's mission?

Read Matthew 28:-18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- What does obedience have to do with being an ambassador of Christ?
- Give a couple of examples of what this looks like?

The second metaphor Kyle talked about is The Body.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- What happens to a body part, like a finger, if it becomes disconnected from the body?
- How does this analogy help explain the importance of staying connected to the body of Christ?
- What steps can you take personally to connect to the body of Christ?

Kyle gave three examples of how Christians are integral parts of the body.

- 1. We are dependent on other Christians.**
- 2. We are one body with many members.**

- What does Paul mean when he says Christians are dependent on one another?
- How do these body parts relate to the way the Church is meant to function?
- How does this concept apply to the differences in backgrounds, gifts, and appearances within the body of Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:15-18

15 Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

- 3. We see each part of the body has been endowed with significance and dignity.**
 - Why should there be no arrogance or self-pity regarding spiritual gifts?
 - How can you better contribute to the body of Christ with the gifts and abilities God has given you?
 - How does recognizing the dignity of others in the body of Christ impact the way you interact with them?
- 4. The body is made up of members.**

Read 1 Corinthians 12:26-27

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

- What does being a member of a church look and feel like to you?
- Do you know what part God has called you to play in the overall membership of the church?
- As a member, how do you support other members and non-members?

The Church is a Family

Read 1 Timothy 3:15

15 If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

- **Honor One Another – Romans 12:10**
- **Greet One Another – 1 Corinthians 16:20**
- **Welcome One Another – Romans 15:7**
- **Show Hospitality to One Another – 1 Peter 4:9**
- **Have Fellowship With One Another – 1 John 1:7**
- **Live in Harmony With One Another – Romans 15:5**
- **Be at Peace With One Another – Mark 9:50**
- **Be Kind to One Another – Ephesians 4:32**
- **Forgive One Another – Colossians 3:13**
- **Bear With One Another – Ephesians 4:2**
- **Bear One Another's Burdens – Galatians 6:2**
- **Care for One Another – 1 Corinthians 12:25**
- **Confess Sins and Pray For One Another – James 5:16**
- **Encourage One Another – Hebrews 10:25**
- **Build One Another Up – 1 Thessalonians 5:11**
- **Exhort One Another – Hebrews 3:13**
- **Instruct One Another – Romans 15:14**
- **Teach and Admonish One Another – Colossians 3:16**
- **Sing With One Another – Ephesians 5:19**
- **Stir Up One Another to Love and Good Works – Hebrews 10:24**
- **Do Good to One Another – 1 Thessalonians 5:15**

Kyle said the church is not an anonymous club; it's a committed family, who is working together to establish Jesus' commands on earth under his authority.

- Do you feel like you are a member of a club or a family when attending church?

- What are the key responsibilities of the church as a Family?
- What is the definition of Family to you?
- How is the church working together to establish Jesus' commands on earth in regard to being a Family?

Church membership is Biblical.

- What do you think this means?
- Give some examples from the bible on what a church membership should look like?
- What does taking communion together have to do with being a member of a church?
- How do the metaphors for the church shape who we are as members?

If we see ourselves as members of a family, we'll strive to be just that-a family.