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“Winning Together”

Main Idea: Jesus is victorious, and He invites us to **win together**.

Sub-Points: Jesus wants us to:

- Commit to the Winning Team
- Participate in The Winning Team
- Invite Others to Join the Winning Team

Part I: Commit to the Winning Team

Jesus wants you to commit to being on the winning team, and to be part of the life of the Church, which He calls His body and His bride. And the Bible makes it very clear: Jesus loves His church!

- You don't have to be a member of Real Life to be a Christian. However, our Membership is our way of committing to being the body of Christ together and being **unified**.
- Church membership is technically not explicitly mandated, but we believe it is a necessary and common-sense conclusion that we see in the early church.

In the early church, we see the Apostle Paul establishing elders over local congregations and calling them churches. These churches were called to:

Follow the leadership of the eldership and learn from their teaching.

- Hebrews 13:7 (ESV) “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”
- How can we follow the eldership of a church with no established beliefs, structure, or accountability?

Commit to worshipping together and encouraging each other.

- Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
- How can we commit to a church body with no commitment?

Keeping each other accountable.

- Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV) “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”
- If there is no “church,” what are we restoring them to?

To take care of their community. In Acts 6, the Apostles prayed over and set aside leaders to take better care of the widows and make sure everyone got food.

- How does that happen without any kind of structure, accountability, or trustworthy system to collect and distribute the tithes and offerings?

Acts 16:5 (ESV) “So the **churches** were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.”

- There is a distinction between the local church congregations and the universal church as a whole, and a distinction between the church and the general population.

Therefore, we see that the early church committed to Christ and to each other as His church.

- Seeking to be obedient to the Lord, we follow the example in Nehemiah 10:1-31, where God's people read his Word together and signed a covenant document saying, “I believe this, I'm in.”

- At Real Life, our membership covenant is not a legally binding document; it's a way to fight for unity in the church.

Part II: Participate on the Winning Team

Acts 2:42-47 (ESV) "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

The disciples are doing life together in a church community.

- They are learning God's Word together. Spending time together. Breaking bread together. Doing life in small groups and at the temple/church building together.
- Their togetherness led them to bear each other's burdens. They prayed for each other, which meant that they understood each other's struggles and hurts. They sold possessions to raise money to support those in need.
- They opened up their homes to one another and shared meals together. They had all things in common and were **unified**.

What a beautiful image of the church, and what we're meant to be.

- Here's an important distinction. None of this is "optional"; it's something that Jesus wants and even commands us to do throughout Scripture. However, our perspective on why we do it changes everything.
- The early church lived this way and thrived because they had a "get to" attitude, not a "have to" attitude.

Part III: Invite Others to Join the Winning Team

Matthew 5:14 (ESV) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

When we follow Jesus together, we shine like a city on a hill and become a beacon of hope to a dying world. Are you inviting others to join the winning team?

- Who are you discipling?
- How can you use your life and influence to show others what a relationship with Jesus looks like?
- Who can you invite into relationship or into your small group?

Small Group Questions:

Icebreaker: If you could instantly become the "best" at any sport, activity, or hobby, what would it be?

1. If you are a member of Real Life, how long have you been a part of our church? If not, have you experienced church membership at a different church?
2. Read Hebrews 13:7, Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 6:1-2, Acts 16:5, Acts 6:1-7 (optional). What does it say about some of the functions of a local church, and how does the concept of church membership help accomplish this?
3. What are some "wins" from this year in our church that you'd like to celebrate?
4. According to Acts 2:42-47, what does participating in the life of the church look like?
5. In this current season, do you think you're walking out your faith with a "get to" or "have to" attitude, and why?
6. How can you personally invite others to join the winning team (Jesus & His church)?
7. What is a practical next step you can take this week?

