

WHY SHOULD I JOIN THE CHURCH?

What Does It Mean To Be Part Of A Church?, Part 2

- 1. God Instituted The Church To Be An _____ In Our Lives** (Mt 16:19; 18:18; Acts 20:18; Heb 13:17; Mt 20:25-28)
 - *"Christians don't join churches; they submit to them."* (Jonathan Leeman, Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus, 9Marks: Building Healthy Churches, Crossway, 2012, p. 30)
- 2. Membership Was A Means Of _____ Who Belonged To The Church Body** (1 Tim 5:9; Acts 1:15; 2:37-47; 4:4; 6:6; Rom 16:1-16; 12:5)
- 3. Local Churches Were Organized To Be _____** (1 Cor 14:40; 1 Tim 5:9)
- 4. Church Membership Is A Mutual Commitment To The _____ Of God's Word** (2 Timothy 2:2, 15-19; 3:16-17).
- 5. Church Membership Is Taking On _____ Responsibilities In The Church** (Acts 2:44; Heb 10:24-25)
- 6. Church Membership Places Ourselves To Be _____ To One Another's Authority In Christ** (Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5)

Answering Misconceptions About Membership

- Why is there a process in becoming a member when it seems so automatic in the Scripture?
- Does this mean I have to tithe? No. You give as the Lord provides. He gives to us with grace, we give to Him with grace. (2 Cor 8-9)
- Isn't church membership legalistic?
- Doesn't church membership take too much time going to business meetings?

Answering Excuses About Church Membership

- Why should I become a member if I'm already a faithful attender?
- Does becoming a church member make me become more committed to the Lord and the church?
- Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating The Church*, profiles commitment (pp. 67ff)
 - a. You Join
 - b. You make the local church a priority.
 - c. You try to make your pastor's joy
 - d. You find ways to serve
 - e. You give
 - f. You connect with people
 - g. You share you passion

HOW CAN I BECOME A MEMBER OF FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH?

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What Does It Mean To Be Part Of A Church?, Part 2

Introduction:

- Cub Scouts – where the uniform, earn ranks, become a Webelo, join the Order of the Arrow
- Boy Scouts – meetings, learn skills, take oath, cite motto
- Girl Scouts – meet, learn skills, sell cookies

- Q: Is joining a church like joining the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts?
- Q: Is the church like a country club or American Express credit card where “Membership has its privileges”

Q: Why should I join the church when I’m content with attending?

Symptoms of wrong thinking about the church (Jonathan Leeman)

- Christians can think it’s fine to attend a church indefinitely without joining;
- Christians think of getting baptized apart from joining;
- Christians view the Lord’s Supper as their own private, mystical experience for Christians and not as an activity for church members who are incorporated into body life together;
- Christians don’t integrate their Monday-to-Saturday lives with the lives of other saints;
- Christians assume they can make a perpetual habit of being absent from the church’s gathering a few Sundays a month or more;
- Christians make major life decisions (moving, accepting a promotion, choosing a spouse, etc.) without considering the effects of those decisions on the family of relationships in the church or without consulting the wisdom of the church’s pastors and other members;
- Christians buy homes or rent apartments with scant regard for how factors such as distance and cost will affect their abilities to serve their church;
- Christians don’t realize that they are partly responsible for both the spiritual welfare and the physical livelihood of the other members of their church, even members they have not met.

Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (pp. 23-24). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

- “A church is not the kingdom; it’s an outpost or **embassy** of that kingdom. What is an embassy? It’s an institution that represents one nation inside another nation. It declares its home nation’s interests to the host nation, and it protects the citizens of the home nation living in the host nation.” *Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 27). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*

1. God Instituted The Church To Be An Authority In Our Lives (Mt 16:19; 18:18; Acts 20:18; Heb 13:17; Mt 20:25-28)

- God instituted the **government** to be an authority in our social lives
- God instituted the local **church** to be an authority in our spiritual lives

Matthew 16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 18:18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

- "... the local church is the authority on earth that Jesus has instituted to officially affirm and give shape to my Christian life and yours." *Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 24). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- "Just as the Bible establishes the government of your nation as your highest authority on earth when it comes to your citizenship in that nation, so the Bible establishes the local church as your highest authority on earth when it comes to your discipleship to Christ and your citizenship in Christ's present and promised nation." (ibid, p. 25)
- Leaders have authority to watch over our souls and must give an account to God for how we did

Acts 20:28 "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" – Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- **"Christians don't join churches; they submit to them."** *Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 30). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- From the non-Christian's standpoint, a local church is a voluntary association. No one has to join. From the standpoint of the Christian life, however, it's not. Once you choose Christ, you must choose his people, too. It's a package deal. Choose the Father and the Son and you have to choose the whole family—which you do through a local church. *Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 31). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*

Matthew 20:25-28 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ... 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2. **Membership Was A Means Of Identifying Who Belonged To The Church Body** (1 Tim 5:9; Acts 1:15; 2:37-47; 4:4; 6:6; Rom 16:1-16)

- **Isn't local church membership a non-biblical concept?**

- Just because local church membership procedures are not specified in the Scripture doesn't mean that it's against Scriptural teaching. It is designed to confirm God's intention for orderliness, guarding the truth, identifying with and participating in the Body of Christ.
- There was an official church roster in 1 Timothy 5:9 that had spiritual requirements.
- The "roll" in 1 Timothy 5 doesn't prove membership, but it showed that they kept records. There was an organized list of widows who were doing good works. These widows were considered part of the local church and were distinguished from others who were not a part of the local family.
- ie/ Missions Boards and Seminaries aren't in the Bible either. But they are founded for good purposes – to be avenues of helping people serve the Lord.
- The reality of local church membership is alluded to in Scripture.

Acts 1:15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120)

- **Acts 2:37-47** records the numeric growth (v. 47) of the church based on believers who were saved and Spirit-filled (v. 41)
- **Acts 4:4** 5,000 added
- The members of the church selected/elected the prototype deacons and presented them to the apostles.
 - **Acts 6:6** These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them
- Paul acknowledged members of the local church in **Romans 16:1-16**.
- In **1 Timothy 5:3-16**, we see a clear teaching on how to handle widows in the church and in verses 9-13 we read this:
- The process of church membership is not specified in Scripture. Individual churches and denominations are free to determine their membership requirements.
- "A church member is a person who has been officially and publicly recognized as a Christian before the nations, as well as someone who shares in the same authority of officially affirming and overseeing other Christians in his or her church." *Leeman, Jonathan (2012-04-30). Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus (9Marks: Building Healthy Churches) (p. 29). Crossway. Kindle Edition.*
- Acts 2:41 depicts how individuals "gladly received his word [and] were baptized." Then they joined the church "and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." The process of local church membership is not clearly defined (outside of salvation and baptism), but the principle of identifying with other believers is clear.
- ***Local church membership is declaring your identification with a group of believers who believe the same things you do.***

Romans 12:5 "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

ie/ some want to be mavericks – independent – not need to get involved in church

ie/ Church is likened in Scripture as a body. It is composed of many cells. What do you call an independent cell that doesn't want to function within the body? CANCER – and it reproduces more of itself as it metastasizes.

ie/ If you go to a 49'er game, don't wear Cowboy blue or Silver and Black. You wear Red & Gold – team colors – identify with your team. Church membership is identifying with your team.

3. **Local Churches Were Organized To Be Orderly** (1 Cor 14:40)

- **The Principle Of Orderliness** – God expects “all things [to] be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). Confusion would exist if decisions made for the local congregation were made by both the saved and unsaved, faithful and unfaithful, regular or transient? ***Church membership is a agreement to the statement of faith and principles of practice of the local church.***

1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

ie/ there was a church – couple of members were unhappy with the pastor
- while on vacation – those disgruntled members called up a lot of old members who had not come in ages and were able to get enough votes to vote the pastor out

1 Timothy 5:9 Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband

- There were records and rolls in the early church.

4. **Church Membership Is A Mutual Commitment To The Authority Of God's Word** (2 Timothy 2:2, 15-19; 3:16-17).

- **The Principle Of Safeguarding The Truth** – Membership to a local church is based on mutual agreement to submit to the integrity, authority and inerrancy of God's Word as our all-sufficient rule of life. The integrity of Scripture is at stake if we allow anyone who volunteers to teach God's Word without first agreeing to Scripture's authority.

2 Timothy 2:2 “The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

ie/ Membership provides the trust that when your kids go to Sunday School or youth group, the teachers or sponsors are members. They are committed to the same teaching the church holds to.

ie/ A company has encoded entry keys so only employees can have access to privileged technology. This company trusts employees and the employees trust each other because they work for the same company. Church membership ensures that we agree on the church's belief system and operating procedures

5. Church Membership Is Taking On Family Responsibilities In The Church (Acts 2:44; Heb 10:24-25)

- **The Principle Of Family Responsibility & Commitment** – Visitors are always welcome at FBC and are invited to visit as often as possible. But visitors are not necessarily obligated to take care of the needs within the church family. But as a family member, we have a responsibility to the rest of family/congregation – we must assist our family members in need (Acts 2:44-45), we must encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).
Church membership is taking on the responsibility of the church family.

Acts 2:44 “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.””

ie/ When someone in the family needs help, the family is first to jump in to help. Church is a family

Hebrews 10:24-25 “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.”

ie/ Tony Evans tells the story:

The story is told of four people in the church whose names were Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

The church needed help meeting its financial obligations and Everybody was asked to participate. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it. But you know who did it? Nobody. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

When the church grounds needed some work, Somebody was asked to help. But Somebody resented being called upon because Anybody could have done it just as well. After all, it was really Everybody's job. In the end the work was given to Nobody, and Nobody got it done.

The process went on and on. Whatever the task that needed to be done, Nobody could be counted on to do it. Nobody visited the sick. Nobody gave liberally. Nobody shared his faith. In short, nobody was a very faithful member.

Finally the day came when Somebody left the church and took Anybody and Everybody with him. Who was left? Nobody!

(“The Importance of Church Membership,”

http://www.tonyevans.org/site/c.feIKLOOpGIF/b.2065715/k.3F7B/The_Importance_of_Church_Membership.htm)

6. Church Membership Places Ourselves To Be Accountable To One Another's Authority In Christ (Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5)

Matthew 18:15-20 [15] "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. [16] But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. [17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. [18] Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed(1) in heaven. [19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

1 Corinthians 5:4-5 4 When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

- Matt Chandler, who once pastored a church that didn't have membership: "I was preparing at the time to preach through the book of Hebrews and 'happened' to be in chapter 13 when verse 17 leapt off the page: 'Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.'

Two questions occurred to me:

- First, if there is no biblical requirement to belong a local church, then which leaders should an individual Christian obey and submit to?
- Second, and more personally, who will I as a pastor give an account for?"

("Is Church Membership Biblical?," <http://www.9marks.org/journal/church-membership-biblical>)

- John Piper: "If there is no church membership, how can you define the group that will take up this sensitive and weighty matter of exhorting the unrepentant person and finally rendering a judgment about his standing in the community? It's hard to believe that just anyone who showed up claiming to be a Christian could be a part of that gathering. Surely, 'the church' must be a definable group to handle such a weighty matter. You know who you mean when you 'take it to the church.'" ("How Important Is Church Membership?," <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/2008/2989/>)

1 Corinthians 5:12-13 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

- There is an "inside" the church and "outside" the church. One could not be "purged" if they are not under the accountability of the church membership.
- Matt Chandler: "How can you kick someone 'out' if there isn't an 'in'? If there is no local commitment to a covenant community of faith, then how do you remove someone from that community of faith? Church discipline won't work if local church membership doesn't exist. ("Is Church Membership Biblical?," <http://www.9marks.org/journal/church-membership-biblical>)

- **Why is there a process in becoming a member when it seems so automatic in the Scripture?** The Scriptures demonstrated that after a person is saved and baptized, they were added to the church (Acts 2:41). Our membership process is designed to confirm one's salvation and baptism. The interview and testimony process before the church family is to affirm one's salvation and commitment to the authority of God's Word.
- **Does this mean I have to tithe?** No. You give as the Lord provides. He gives to us with grace, we give to Him with grace. (2 Cor 8-9)
 - ie/ Rick Warren: "Most people associate the term *membership* with paying dues, meaningless rituals, silly rules and handshakes, and having your name on some dusty roll. Paul, however, had a different image of membership. To him, being a member of the church did not refer to some cold induction into an institution, but rather it meant becoming a vital organ of a living body (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 6:15; 1 Cor 12:12-27)." (*The Purpose Driven Church*, p. 310)
- **Isn't church membership legalistic?**
 - It shouldn't be.
 - Grace replaces legalism. But making sure the Word of God is adhered to is not legalism. Adding to the Word is legalism.
- **Doesn't church membership take too much time going to business meetings?**
 - The business side of ministry is part of our family business.

Answering Excuses About Church Membership

- ◆ **Why should I become a member if I'm already a faithful attender?** As in courtship, every church visitor sees if a particular church is the one the Lord wants him/her to commit to. The prospective member has every intention to make a commitment if there is compatibility. As in marriage, every believer should make a commitment to a local church as a member to participate in the family life as an integral part of Christ's body.

ie/ We all know that guy who keeps dating a girl. Many years pass and he's not ready to commit to marriage. What's he waiting for? Does he fear of commitment? How about you?

ie/ John Piper writes:

- "We should take responsibility to discipline those of the body who do not repent from public sin that brings reproach on the name of Christ.
- We should declare ourselves part of the body so that if we are wayward, we ourselves would be liable to such exclusion.
- We should take our position under the leadership and authority of a particular group of elders.
- We should declare ourselves part of a group who expect to be watched over and cared for by a particular group of elders.
- And we should find our place in the organic whole as a body part—a member—of a local body of Christ.

"That is God's plan for us and for this church. That's what we mean by membership. All of those aspects of membership are rooted in the truth that the local church is an expression of

the universal church. Part of what it means to belong to the body of Christ is to belong to a body." ("How Important Is Church Membership?," <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/2008/2989/>)

- ◆ **Does becoming a church member make me become more committed to the Lord and the church?** Church membership may not result in greater commitment to the Lord and the church, but commitment to the Lord should result in church membership. To identify with God's people, the foundational beliefs in Scripture and fulfilling family responsibility to the church is a result of being committed to Christ.

Joshua Harris, *Stop Dating The Church*, profiles commitment (pp. 67ff)

- a. You Join
 - "I'm here...tentatively...at least for the immediate future...I think."
 - "I'm here, all of me, and I trust God with my future."
 - Jim Elliott: "Wherever you are, be all there."
- b. You make the local church a priority.
 - Cites student: "For me, choosing the right school followed choosing the right church." (p. 70)
- c. You try to make your pastor's joy
 - "First, embrace, obey, and love God's Word personally. Noting makes a pastor happier than to see a member of his church growing in godliness." (p. 71)
 - "And take it upon yourself to protect your pastor by praying for him and by refusing to engage in slander against him."
- d. You find ways to serve
 - "Serving is spending yourself – energy, time, and gifts – for something outside of yourself." (p. 71)

1 Peter 4:10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

 - Serving helps you to own the church – belong, commitment
- e. You give
 - "Money is a tangible return for what we have invested of ourselves – in time, abilities, business choices, and other personal resources." (p. 74)
- f. You connect with people
 - "doing life" with each other
 - pursuing relationships with church outside of the church building
 - fellowship
- g. You share you passion

HOW CAN I BECOME A MEMBER OF FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH?

Prerequisites:

SECTION A. QUALIFICATIONS:

Persons applying for membership:

1. Must be born again through personal acceptance of the Lord Jesus as Savior.
2. Must be baptized by immersion as a public testimony of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.
3. Must seek to maintain a consistent godly life in accordance with the Word of God.
4. Must accept and subscribe fully to the Constitution and By-Laws as herein contained.

SECTION B. PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERSHIP:

1. Those desiring to unite with the Church:
 - a. Must submit an application for membership.
 - b. Must meet with the designates of the Church Board for examination and instructions.
 - c. Must be unanimously recommended by them for membership.
 - d. Must receive three-fourths (3/4) votes by voting members present at any business meeting.

Procedure:

1. Familiarize yourself with the FBC Constitution then fill out the membership application available in the church foyer. We can send you one at your request.
2. After submitting the application, you will be interviewed by a pastor and/or board member to ascertain your understanding of your salvation and your intention to become a church member. This informal and non-threatening interview allows you to ask whatever questions you have concerning membership, salvation, and the church.
3. At a quarterly business meeting, you will encourage the FBC members by sharing your testimony of salvation and your intentions to join the church. After a vote, you will be congratulated as a member of FBC.

Participation:

- **Getting Involved:** Waste no time in serving the Lord by serving the saints. As a specific part of Christ's body, God has given you particular spiritual gifts to serve other parts of the body. Set your sites on a type of ministry and ask the pastors to train you to do it if you so desire.
- **The Term For Membership:** The term for membership is conditionally indefinite. If you move away, you could transfer your membership to another church. You may resign a membership as the Lord leads. Membership is also removed if you've been out of contact with the church for over a year or through excommunication. Some students possess dual membership with another church while a student in another location.