

**Why Should I?
“Why Should I Become a Member?”**

(ILL) Young Christian mother—Trying to join a very elite church (wasn’t able to dress like the others).

- Week One: Pastor-Pray about it.
- Week Two: Again
- Week Three: What gifts? Pray.
- Week Four: Pray about it one more week
- Never came back
- Sees her and asks—she said “as I was praying about it God said that He had been trying to join your church for years and you hadn’t let Him in either.”
 - ✓ Sad that many have stories like that
 - ✓ Frank Bushman (hurt deeply in Morocco)
 - ✓ Many have very bad experiences—reasons not to join
 - ✓ Some have been taught it’s NOT biblical
 - ✓ I have not emphasized the issue enough

NOTE: Springs from the **focus of the New Testament on One Church or One Body**

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.
Romans 12:4-5 NKJV

For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.
1 Corinthians 10:17 NKJV

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
Ephesians 4:4 NKJV

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.
Colossians 3:15 NKJV

NOTE THIS:

2:47: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Stoll—“The Lord did two things together. He added to their number those who were being saved. He didn’t add them to the church without saving them, and he didn’t save those without adding them to the church. Salvation and church membership went together: they still do.” (Stoll: *The Living Church: The Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*)

Why should I become a member of the church?

I. What Church Membership is and What it is Not.

A. What it is not

1. It is NOT a specifically spelled-out command of Scripture.
2. It is NOT a means of salvation or a means of grace.
3. It is NOT an insurance policy or protection against ungodly living.
4. It is NOT a pre-requisite for fellowship or usefulness in the church.
5. It is NOT an insignificant formality within the life of the church.

B. What it is—“outward demonstration of one’s inner commitment to identify with Christ and His followers, be taught the scriptures, submit to God-ordained leadership, selflessly serve others, and grow in Christ together.”

II. What Evidence of Church Membership can be found in the New Testament?

A. Numbers were known

1. Acts 1:15-120
2. Acts 2:41-added 3,000
3. Acts 4:4-5,000

B. Rolls were kept

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, 10 and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the Lord’s people, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. 1 Timothy 5:9, 10 NIV

C. Deacons were chosen by the congregation

Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. Acts 6:2-5 NKJV

NOTE: Bare minimum was the understanding that believers identified themselves with other believers in some formal way.

D. Discipline was practiced

For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 NKJV

NOTE: Knew who was "inside."

E. Worship was corporate

Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 1 Corinthians 14:23 NKJV

1. Modern "home church" is our biblical
2. They may have met in homes but they did not "home church" like "home school."

F. Pastors/Shepherds must give an account for the flock

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17 NKJV

NOTE: How could they if there is not record of who their flock was?

III. Why is Church Membership Important?

- A. It follows the pattern described in the New Testament
- B. It openly demonstrates the reality of the Body of Christ

Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Corinthians 12:27 NKJV

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1. When you join a church, you make it viable.
2. You show that even though you are an individual, you are part of the Body—joined together with others.
3. You take the Body of Christ out of a realm of theoretical and give it a meaning that others can see.
4. You demonstrate your commitment to the proper working of each part of the body.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Christ — 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:11-16 NKJV

C. It encourages new believers to be committed to the local Body of Christ.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 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. Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV

(Discourages “Lone Ranger” Christianity)

D. It undermines independent, non-committed Christianity

1. Accountability to one another, submission to biblical authority, and the practice of the “one anothers” on all elements of a church united
2. Stewardship of our gifts become possible and necessary

E. It demonstrates a commitment to the spiritual family

1. I want to be more than a bystander
2. I enter into a covenant relationship with other believers in order to love them as an active part of my spiritual family

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 1 John 4:7-8 NKJV

IV. What is Required of Church Members?

A. Bare essentials

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47 NKJV

1. Salvation
2. Baptism
3. Desire to participate
 - a. Doctrinal truth
 - b. Caring for one another
 - c. Communion
 - d. Praying for one another

B. Other responsibilities

1. Faithful attendance

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 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. Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV

2. Financial support

On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 1 Corinthians 16:2-4 NKJV

3. Devotion to others

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; Romans 12:10 NKJV

4. Service

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

5. **Active participation** (meetings, planning, ought to participate).

Conclusion:

TRUE:

— Church membership is not spelled out in the Bible and there is no verse that says “thou shalt become members of the church.”

BUT

— It is implied in the nature of the church and Christian discipleship that everyone should, but a complete commitment of some kind, put their name on the line saying “I’m here. While I am in this place, and until God leads me otherwise, these are my people and I’m committed to them.”

CHURCH

— Not a spiritual buffet where you pick and choose the parts you want

NOTE: Only in America

- ✓ It is a place to be accepted
- ✓ It is a place to be built up
- ✓ It is a place of support
- ✓ It is a place to serve

I believe that church membership is a question of being obedient, not personal preference.