

Lesson 3

Church Membership – Lesson

THE CHURCH AND MEMBERSHIP

THE CHURCH

Our relation to the church is directly influenced by our understanding of the church.

Why go to church? Why do we have a church? What is its importance?

God makes much of the church in this age. It is God's institution for worship, service, evangelism, missions, and for every other God-given spiritual ministry. Nothing can substitute for the local church. God has a goal, aim, purpose, and place for the church; we need to understand its ministry.

The meaning of the word *Church*

The word *church* comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*, which means to “*call out*.” The church is literally “*called out ones*,” or those who are saved and belong to the Lord. It means to “bring together” and to “call out from among”.

Over one hundred times the usage of this word in Scripture had to do with the local church. This is where God puts the emphasis for this age.

The word does not mean (1) to be religious, (2) to distinguish denominations, (3) to refer to sects, or (4) to denote the building or meeting place.

It definitely is used to refer to saved people. Therefore, the people are the church. Thus in Scripture it is primarily dealing with a particular assembly of the saved ([Acts 20:28](#); [I Timothy 3:15, 16](#); [Ephesians 2:19](#); [I Corinthians 1:2](#); [II Corinthians 1:1](#); [Galatians 1:2](#)).

The purpose of the church

1. To bring glory to God ([Ephesians 3:21](#); [Ephesians 1:6](#), [Ephesians 1:12](#))
2. To develop its members spiritually ([Acts 20:28-32](#); [Acts 11:23-26](#))
3. To be God's pillar and foundation of the truth ([1 Timothy 3:15](#))
4. To evangelize the world ([Acts 1:8](#); [Matthew 28:18-20](#))

The blessing of the church

1. It will deepen your fellowship ([Acts 2:41, 42](#); [Acts 12:5](#); [I John 1:3, 4](#))
2. It will guard against your backsliding ([Hebrews 10:24, 25](#); [Proverbs 14:14](#); [Jeremiah 2:19](#); [Jeremiah 2:21](#))
3. It will enlarge your service ([Acts 4:23-31](#); [Acts 6:1-8](#); [Acts 11:19-26](#); [Acts 13:1-4](#))
4. It will strengthen your testimony ([Acts 15:41](#)). Cf. [John 20:24, 25](#) – the absence of Thomas in the upper room.

5. It will deepen your prayer life ([Acts 1; 4:23-31; 12:5](#))

6. It is a place for souls to be saved.

The church, then, is a group of baptized believers in a community who are banded together for the purpose of preaching the Gospel, observing the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), and building up the members to bring glory to God.

The other references to the word church in the New Testament refer to the "body of Christ" or the "bride of Christ," who will be gathered together unto Him when He comes again ([Colossians 1:18, 24; Revelation 19:7-9; Ephesians 5:25, 26](#)).

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

In examining the New Testament, we find that membership in a local church is taught and practiced because:

1. Our participation in Christ necessitates it.

a. Christ founded the church ([Matthew 16:18](#)). He founded it for our benefit and blessing and for His glory.

b. Christ is the Head of the church ([Colossians 1:18](#)). We are His body ([Ephesians 5:30](#)). As members of the body of which He is the Head, we must participate in the church.

c. Christ loved the church ([Ephesians 5:25](#)).

2. The additions to the church require it.

Anyone who knows arithmetic knows that you cannot add a definite number to an indefinite number ([Acts 2:41, 47](#)).

3. The business of the church cannot operate without — [Acts 6:1-5](#).

When a church is making a decision, who does the voting? Can you have an election without a definite list?

Even churches who boast in not having a membership still work up lists of eligible voters and must have a basis for doing so. This, then, is really their membership list.

4. The discipline of the church rests upon it.

Matthew 18:17 –

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”

In this verse God refers to a definite group of people is a definite place. If the member neglects to hear the church – a definite body – something happens. It would be impossible to put someone out of an organization of which he was not a member.

I Corinthians 5:4 –

“In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...”

In this verse Paul tells the church at Corinth how to deal with one of its own members.

5. The organism of the church demands it.

In [I Corinthians 12:12-17](#) Paul is speaking of the “one body.” He refers to various parts of the body. He was not speaking of something future, for it existed right then and there.

Of what was Paul speaking? Obviously he was referring to the local church.

- a. This letter was written to a local church.
[I Corinthians 1:2](#) states that the letter was addressed *“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth.”*
- b. All the way through the letter, Paul has been dealing with specific problems. This letter had to be written to a local church with definite problems. Paul could not have written any part of this letter to the future church because these believers will neither necessarily work together nor against each other.

THEREFORE

When Paul described the church in I Corinthians 12, we realize he was writing to people who make up a local church. An individual is either a member or he is not a member. We are not all fingers, nor are we all ears. But we are either attached or unattached. Not to be a member of a local a Bible -preaching church is contrary to Christ’s plan for our lives. What are you doing in this regard?

Lesson 3

Church Membership – Assignments

1. Memorize [Hebrews 10:25](#). Also, we suggest you memorize [I Corinthians 15:58](#).
2. Read John, chapters 15-21. Note the number of times you find a form of the word believe. Record this information under “NOTES”.
3. Answer the following questions in your own words:

- a. What must true believers not neglect? ([Hebrews 10:25](#))

- b. What is the right attitude in worship services? ([Psalm 122:1](#))

- c. List some things the early believers did as they met together.

[Matthew 18:19-20](#)

[I Corinthians 16:1-2](#)

[I Corinthians 11:23-25](#)

- d. Why should we be concerned for one another? ([Romans 12:5](#))

- e. What attitude should the Christian have toward his pastor and other spiritual leaders?

([I Thessalonians 5:12-13](#); [Hebrews 13:7](#))

- f. In addition to the apostles and prophets, list those responsible to build up the church.

([Ephesians 4:11-12](#))

- g. What two truths do we learn about the church in [I Timothy 3:15](#)?

Growing In Grace

Lesson 3

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NOTES:

1. Promises I have found in John 15-21 that were a real blessing to me (List at least three):

2. A truth I received from my daily reading of John 15-21 that I applied to my life that day:

Day 1 – [John 15](#) _____

Day 2 – [John 16](#) _____

Day 3 – [John 17](#) _____

Day 4 – [John 18](#) _____

Day 5 – [John 19](#) _____

Day 6 – [John 20](#) _____

Day 7 – [John 21](#) _____

3. The verses in which I found a form of the word “believe”:

[Continue on to Lesson 4 >>>](#)