



MEMBERSHIP

Living As A Church • The Training Hour • Spring 2018



LOW COMMITMENT

- The church is viewed as a club.
- The church is viewed as a voluntary organization where membership is optional for you.
- The church is viewed as a service provider.
- The church is viewed as a friendly group of people who share an interest in religious things and gather weekly to talk about the divine.


QUESTIONS

- Where is membership in the Bible?
- Does the Bible differentiate between attenders and members?
- What does being a church member entail?



DEFINING MEMBERSHIP



- Membership, in common usage, means voluntary association to a group, like a club.
 - But when we talk about membership in the church, we are talking about identifying who is "in" and who is "out."
 - Therefore, the members of the church are the church.
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MEMBERSHIP IN THE BIBLE

- All through the Scriptures, God has chosen to use a distinct and separate people for the purpose of displaying his character.
(Noah and his family, Abraham and his descendants, the nation of Israel, the church)
- God has always intended for a sharp, bright line to distinguish those who trust in him and those who do not.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NT

- They confessed faith in Christ.
- The church recognized the credibility of that confession and baptized them.
- Baptism functioned as the front door for entrance into the membership of the church.
- Acts 2:38 – “Repent and be baptized everyone of you”

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NT

- They counted those who were being saved (Acts 2:41; 4:4).
- The Jerusalem church was a distinct community with its own issues to sort out (Acts 6:1).
- Those persecuting the church knew who to target (Acts 8).
- The group of baptized believers in a city comprised the members of the church there. All attenders were members. But they knew who they were. (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1).

MEMBERSHIP IN THE NT

- The elders of local congregations knew they had a specific group of Christians they were responsible for (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12–13) 1 Tim. 3:5; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:1–5).
- There is evidence that they kept lists: 1 Tim. 5:9
- Christ gave the church authority to judge confessions and confessions, and thus declare who truly represents Jesus and who doesn't (Matt. 16 & 18).

MATTHEW 16:13-20

- Jesus says he will build his church on Peter and his confession.
- Then Jesus gives the apostles the keys of the kingdom.



DELEGATED AUTHORITY




- Binding & loosing: attaching a label of true or false to a confessor.
- Jesus' (heaven's representative on earth) affirms Peter's confession. Then Jesus gives Peter and the apostles the ability to do the same with others.
- They would act as God's official representatives on earth for affirming true gospel confessions and confessors.



WHAT THE CHURCH IS






- The local church is Christ's institution, set in the present, that represents his future kingdom.
 - The church proclaims the message of the kingdom, affirms those who are citizens of the kingdom, and shows what submission to his lordship looks like.
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THE CHURCH AS AN EMBASSY

- Embassies . . .
 - Officially represent the mother country.
 - Don't create citizens, they just officially recognize them.

THE CHURCH AS AN EMBASSY




- The church is the only institution that officially represents Jesus Christ on earth.
 - The church doesn't save people, but it does officially recognize those who claim to be representatives of Jesus.
 - A church member is a person who has been officially and publicly recognized as a Christian before the nations.
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MATTHEW 18:15-20

- Our sin is out of step with our confession of faith. Therefore, we confront one another.
- If we repent, then our confession of faith regains its credibility and the confrontation stops.
- If we fail to repent, we eventually will be removed from the community and our label of "Christ's representative" will be removed.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13



- Paul commands the church to remove a sexually immoral man from their church community.
 - The church is saying this man's confession of faith is no longer credible.
 - There is a clear line between inside and outside the church (v. 12).
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THE IDEAL NT CHURCH

- All believers in a locale were members of a church.
- If they came from another area/church and were already confessing Christ, their confession would be evaluated.
- False teachers/confessors were refuted and turned away.
- True confessors would be added to the list.
- There were only three possible groups in the church at any one time: members, unbelievers, believing visitors.



**WHY IS MEMBERSHIP SO FORMAL
IN TODAY'S CHURCH AS COMPARED
TO THE EARLY CHURCH?**





THE HISTORY OF MEMBERSHIP

- **Israel:** You were born into membership or converted both spiritually and physically
- **Early church:** All baptized believers in a city gathered together. If they moved, they joined the church in the new city.
- **State church (4th-17th cent.):** You were born into membership.
- **Freedom of religion & denominations (18th cent.-present):** You choose to join and churches needed to know who was among their flock and not just passing through.

WHY SO FORMAL TODAY?



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1. **The Number of Churches:** There are many churches in one city so there's a need to clearly designate the different flocks.
 2. **The Ease of Attending:** It's so easy to attend that attendance doesn't show commitment like it does in other contexts (i.e. persecuted church).
 3. **The Number of People:** With so many people in the church, there needs to be a way for the elders to hear a believer's confession of faith in Christ and make a judgment on it.
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WHY SO FORMAL TODAY?




- Formal membership in the church today is a tool to help us best obey and implement the instructions found in Scripture.
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FORMAL COMMITMENT

- The church body says to the individual: "We recognize your profession of faith, baptism, and discipleship to Christ as valid. Therefore, we publicly affirm and acknowledge you as belonging to Christ and to our fellowship."
- The individual says to the church body: "Insofar as I recognize you as a faithful, gospel-declaring church, I submit my presence and my discipleship to your love and oversight."



WHY WE NEED MEMBERSHIP



1. To affirm our faith and doctrine
 2. To strengthen our witness
 3. To help us grow in Christ
 4. To protect us from the self-deception of sin
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WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT



- America
 - Papua New Guinea
 - Persecuted church
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