



CHURCH - Why Does Membership Matter?

To many, church membership is equal with having your name in the Book of Life. But Church membership is so much more than that. Today we discover biblical church membership.

The early church didn't have different denominations or another local church right around the corner. Paul wrote to *THE CHURCH* in Corinth, *THE CHURCH* in Ephesus, *THE CHURCH* in Philippi. If you lived in that town, you were either a part of *THE CHURCH* or you weren't a part of any church.

THE CHURCH of Madison doesn't exist. There isn't one local church. Out of the many local churches, there are many different dominations, many different leaders, and many different doctrines being taught.

The early church wasn't divided like that. Each city had ONE CHURCH with a several recognized leaders, defined doctrines, clear expectations, & the same unifying purpose.

The early Church recorded numbers and names.

Acts 1:15¹⁵ In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters—the number of people who were together was **about a hundred and twenty**—and said:

Acts 2:41⁴¹ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day **about three thousand people** were added to them.

Acts 6:3³ Brothers and sisters, select from among you **seven men** of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty.

1 Timothy 5:9⁹ No widow is to be enrolled **on the list** for support unless she is at least sixty years old, has been the wife of one husband,

- The early church was tracking who and how many people were a part of the team. The leaders were called to equip those people for ministry!

Ephesians 4:11-13¹¹ And He Himself [Jesus] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,¹² **equipping the saints for the work of ministry**, to build up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness.

WHY Membership?

When we talk about Church Membership, we're not talking about simply adding someone's name to a list.

- **Tom Rainer** and his team (specializing in researching and aiding Church health), note that in most churches, only 1 out of 3 people are "biblical, functioning members".¹ In other words, many say they are part of the team, but never get on the field - they are spectators, not participants - consumers, not contributors.

Church Members are Teammates Working Together to Further the Kingdom

Members ask much more than, "*What can this church do for me and my family?*" Members ask, "*What can me and my family do for OUR church?*"

Here's what that looks like as Paul writes the Church in Rome.

Romans 12:3³ For **by the grace given to me**, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly [NET *sober discernment*], as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one.

First - **be humble**. Paul needed God's **grace** and so do we. When we all start with that understanding, we will not more highly of ourselves than we should. Paul uses a word-picture of using **sober discernment** [NET - Greek] This metaphor suggests the danger of being drunk - 'full of yourself' - in danger of becoming "egoholics!"²

¹ Tom Rainer, *I Am a Church Member*, 17.

² Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 234.

But what if we realized that ***we only stand in the shadow of the cross?***

Romans 12:4-5 ⁴ Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, ⁵ in the same way **we who are many are one body in Christ** and individually **members of one another**.

The NET translates this as "**members who belong to one another.**" Different parts, all important.

Romans 12:6-7 ⁶ According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the proportion of one's faith; ⁷ if service, use it in service; if teaching, in teaching; ⁸ if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

We need ALL THAT!!!! Church Members who are committed to Jesus and one another, share ALL THAT and more! There is also to be a love for PURITY and love for one another.

Romans 12:9-10 ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ **Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.**

Christians should be devoted to each other, **brothers & sisters** in Christ, working to out-serve and **honor** each other!

Romans 12:11-16 ¹¹ Do not lack diligence in zeal; **be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord.** ¹² Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. ¹³ Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. **Do not be proud;** instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

When we serve the Lord and serve each other - by praying together, meeting each others' needs, celebrating together & weeping together it's no wonder that we will **live in harmony with one another** - the prayer of every parent when the kids aren't getting along. Finally, Paul fires warns of the attitude that causes churches to implode - PRIDE.

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Is it enough for you simply COME TO CHURCH and spectate, or do you want to **BE THE CHURCH and Participate?** Are you a Contributor or Consumer? Do you show up TO SERVE or show up TO BE SERVED?

HOW Membership?

Every adult desiring membership at Fellowship must go through Starting Point:

- **WHAT WE BELIEVE:** Who is Jesus? What does it mean to be a Christian? Why is Baptism so important?
- **HOW WE BEHAVE:** Our Vision (Love God. Love People - inside the church and outside the church. Develop Disciples), Church Structure (Relationships in the Church, honoring & serving one another, plugging into ministry).

Check all that apply:

- I have repented of my sin and trusted Jesus with my life.
 - I need to repent of sin & trust Jesus.
- I have been biblically baptized (by immersion *after* belief in Jesus)
 - I need to be baptized.
- I sense the leading of the Holy Spirit to unite with the Fellowship church family.

Share your Story How did you trust Jesus? Tell about your baptism. (use the back of page for more room)

Having received Jesus as my Lord and been baptized, and being in agreement with Fellowship's statements, strategy and structure, I now follow the leading of the Holy Spirit to unite with the Fellowship church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following: (explained in more depth in Starting Point Student Booklet pp. 30-31)

- Protect the Unity of God's church** (Love others, refuse gossip, follow leaders)
- Share the Responsibility of God's church** (Pray/Serve so disciples are developed, invite/welcome guests)
- Serve in the Ministry of God's church** (Discover gifts/talents, get equipped, & serve others)
- Support the Testimony of God's church** (Live Godly, attend faithfully, give regularly)

Want to talk further?

contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582),
Justin (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764),
or another follower of Jesus soon!

Or call our **deacons & wives:** Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.