

# Church Membership

## Week 4

### Schedule:

**Week 1:** What is the church and is it important?

Week 2: What is Church Membership and is it important?

Week 3: What are the Church and its members like?

**Week 4: What are the responsibilities and privileges of membership?**

**Week 5:** What do we do if a member does not represent Christ?

**Week 6:** What will practicing meaningful membership look like?

Church membership is much more than simply having your name on a roster, attending services, and giving some money. What is expected of a church member?

### Responsibilities:

#### 1. Observe the Ordinances of the Church

##### A. Baptism

Matthew 28:19–20 (ESV) — **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Acts 2:38 (ESV) — **38** And Peter said to them, “**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:41 (ESV) — **41** So **those who received his word were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Acts 8:12 (ESV) — **12** But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women.

Acts 8:36–38 (ESV) — **36** And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “See, here is water! **What prevents me from being baptized?**” **38** And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, **and he baptized him**.

Acts 9:18 (ESV) — **18** And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. **Then he rose and was baptized;**

Acts 10:47–48 (ESV) — 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” **48** And **he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

“(baptism)... is the first step of obedience in which the believer outwardly identifies himself with Jesus Christ and His church. It is the initial sign of being a part of the new covenant. Furthermore, baptism is related to salvation in the sense that those who refuse it disobey a direct commandment of God and thus bring the validity of their faith into serious question” (1 John 2:3, James 2:14-26, John 14:15)

“It is also important to note that our responsibilities regarding baptism do not end after we are baptized. We then have the responsibility to witness the baptism of others entering the body, confirm them in their outward identification with Christ and the church, and hold them accountable to the responsibilities they now have as members of the body.”

**Wayne Mack**

## **B. Lord’s Supper (communion)**

1 Corinthians 11:23–30 (ESV) — **23** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. **Do this in remembrance of me.**” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. **Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.**” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.** **27** Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

“Baptism is an outward sign of entrance into the covenant, the Lord’s Supper is a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, the event that initiated the new covenant and actually made it possible. And our Savior Himself commanded that we partake of the bread and wine that symbolize His body and blood.”

## **2. Attend Church Regularly (why)**

### **A. GOD COMMANDED IT:**

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV) — **24** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, **25 not neglecting to meet together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

### **B. EARLY CHRISTIANS MODELED IT:**

Acts 2:42 (ESV) — **42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

### **C. SPIRITUAL GROWTH DEPENDS ON IT:**

Ephesians 4:11–12 (ESV) — **11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

**D. MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT IT:**

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV) — **11** Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

**3. Study the Bible**

**A. EARLY CHRISTIANS EAGERLY STUDIED GOD'S WORD:**

Acts 17:11 (ESV) — **11** Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; **they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.**

**B. THE BELIEVER GROWS THROUGH BIBLE STUDY:**

2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV) — **16** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17** that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Nobody can grow to be a strong Christian who does not develop a personal practice of reading and studying God's Word for themselves.

**4. PRAY**

In all things, pray that God would accomplish His purposes in the situations that He has brought into someone's life.

**A. For Yourself**

James 1:5 (ESV) — **5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Matthew 26:41 (ESV) — **41** Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

**B. For Others**

1. Family members
2. Neighbors and co-workers
3. Unsaved
4. New believers
5. Missionaries
6. Church and ministries
7. Nation

**C. For the Church Leadership**

1. Personal spiritual lives

2. Wisdom
  - a. Preaching and teaching
  - b. Planning for the church
  - c. Working with people
3. God's blessing; for God to use them
4. To stand strong in spiritual battle
5. Their families

## 5. Support the church financially

### The follower of Christ should give:

- A. **WILLINGLY:** "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:7
- B. **PROPORTIONATELY:** "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." - 1 Corinthians 16:2
- C. **SACRIFICIALLY:** "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality." - 2 Corinthians 8:1
- D. **Regularly**

**The Tithe-** A regular offering of at least 10% is usually referred to as the "tithe." Giving a tenth (10%) of a person's income to the Lord as a minimum is taught in the Old Testament as the appropriate amount when seeking to worship the Lord with our finances. The New Testament promotes giving in this same context, but with a different emphasis. The New Testament believer is instructed to give regularly (the first day of the week) and in accordance with his ability, as God graces him. This means that each believer is to give to God through the local church an amount that is above what is necessary to meet the needs of himself and his family. For some families, 10% is the maximum they can give; for others with fewer needs and demands on their financial resources, they have the ability to give more than 10%. Each should give cheerfully and willingly as God blesses and supplies their need.

### What Giving Does for Us (2 Cor. 8-9)

- A. It reminds us that **Everything** belongs to God.
- B. It reminds us that **Financial Blessings** come from God.
- C. It keeps us from being **Materialistic**.
- D. It makes us use our financial resources **carefully**.
- E. It makes us **Depend** on the Lord instead of our own **Resources**.
- F. It fosters in us a spirit of **Obedience, Submission, and Trust**.

### What Giving Does for the Local Church

- A. It takes care of maintaining an **Assembly Place** for the local body of believers.
- B. It meets the needs of the **Pastors**.
- C. It provides the means for **Evangelism** and **Discipleship**
- D. It equips the believers for **Service**.
- E. It furthers the **Cause of Christ** in our area.

## 6. WITNESSING

**Acts 1:8 (ESV) — 8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

**Acts 5:42 (ESV) — 42** And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

## 7. SERVICE

God has given spiritual gifts to every member of the body of Christ so that everyone would use his or her gifts to build up the entire body (1 Cor. 12:7). A church should expect that all of its members will serve the whole church as God enables.

- A. Teaching (Sunday School, Children’s Church)
- B. Substitute Teachers
- C. Youth Work (Junior/Senior High)
- D. Kids4Truth
- E. Music
- F. Junior Church Worker
- G. Nursery Worker
- H. Greeter, Usher
- I. Leadership ( Kids4Truth, Head Usher, Deacon)

- J. Hospitality, Kitchen help, Event preparation
- K. Transportation
- L. Sound
- M. Maintenance

## Privileges:

Church membership is not only a commitment on the member's part to the church, but it is a commitment on the church's part to the member. Both the church as a body and its leaders vow to care for the member by providing the following privileges.

### 1. **Ministering in the Church**

- See attached articles

### 2. **Services provided by the Church** ( Deacon Fund, Baby Showers, Meals...)

Reason 1: Placing undue burdens on the church body.

Reason 2: Treating all non-members fairly.

**\*Important:** Individuals can and should show hospitality to those they personally know and want to show love to.

### 3. **Loving Accountability**

## **1 Major Misconception on Biblical Membership:**

### **Unloving (unkind, unfair, exclusive...)**

#### **What's the problem?**

- God calls the church to draw boundaries.

"The argument for church membership and discipline is an argument for a clear line between church and world, as clear as the line between the inside of Eden and outside of Eden, the inside of the ark and the outside of the ark... Yet **what stands in the way of our ability to embrace the biblical call for such a line are our distorted and holy-less, truth-less, wisdom-less conceptions of God and his love.** Recovering a biblical understanding of the church and its boundaries, therefore, requires us to reconsider what love is and how it's the very boundaries of the church that help to define love for the world" (The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love, pg 20)

- The world's view of love distorts God's true example and expression of Love.

"In today's world if an action is motivated by love, it bears all the vindication it needs. It's the ultimate trump card: "But they love each other," or, "That doesn't seem like a loving thing to do," or, "What you're saying might be true, but it's not loving." We know love can be tragic. We know it can be foolish. But love alone is good, and always good. Religious people justify this stance by saying, "God is love." Nonreligious people point to the good of humanity and say "All we need is love."" (Ibid, pg 48)

"We assume not that God is love but that love is God. In other words, we don't go before the real creator of the universe and say to him, "Please tell us what *you* are like and therefore how *you* define love." Rather, we begin with our own self-defined concept of love and allow this self-defined concept to play god. When I say it "plays god," I mean that we let it define right and wrong, good and bad, glory-worthy and glory-less, even though such valuations belong to God alone. Love becomes the ultimate idol." (Ibid, pg 24)

Illustration: LGBT community...

### **Wrong Assumptions about Love:**

1. No boundaries can be placed on love. Rather, love establishes all the boundaries.
2. Love is disassociated from institutional structures and institutional acts of judgment.
3. Love and church don't go together, particularly a church with sharp boundaries and authoritative pronouncements.
4. Love and authority have nothing to do with one another.

### **How does God define love? A: Love = Obedience to God**

**John 14:20–23 (ESV)** — **20** In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. **21** **Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.** And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." **22** Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" **23** Jesus answered him, "**If anyone loves me, he will keep my word,** and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**John 15:10–11 (ESV)** — **10** **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.** **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

**1 John 5:3 (ESV)** — **3** **For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.** And his commandments are not burdensome.

**Hebrews 12:8 (ESV)** — **8** If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

# Must someone be a church member before being allowed to serve?

## Answer

Many churches attempt to adopt an inviting and warm posture by allowing both non-Christians and prospective Christian members to serve publicly in the church. Certainly outreach is a good motive. But is this the whole picture? We believe that public acts of service—like serving in the nursery, teaching children, leading music, teaching adult Sunday school, and leading a small group—should be reserved for members of the church. Why?

1. **The activities of public ministry, generally speaking, represent the “church.”** When a person stands in front of the church playing music, or behind a counter to receive children into the nursery, most people will identify that person with the church. Most people will make assumptions about the church based on any knowledge they have of those individuals.
2. **Those who represent the “church” represent Christ.** That’s why Jesus tells Saul (who had been persecuting Christians) that Saul has been persecuting not the “church” or “Christians” but “me” (Acts 9:4).
3. **The activities of public ministry, therefore, are a trust, not an entitlement or an outreach device.** No one is entitled to public ministry, no matter how long they’ve attended a church. And at no place in the New Testament does God or Jesus use non-Christians to represent him. God graciously calls out to all sinners, yes, but he *identifies himself* and *dwells together with* only with those who are repentant (“where two or three are gathered together *in my name* [identification with Christ], *there am I* [Christ’s presence],” Matt. 18:20).
4. **Reserving public ministries for members, therefore, protects the reputation of the church and of Christ.** Allowing individuals who have not submitted to the church to be publicly identified with the church is to allow unaccountable people to inform onlookers of what Christ is like. The church has an interest in teaching the world that Christ is gracious and loving, but it also has an interest in teaching the world that he is holy and calls sinners to repentance. Therefore, it should take care to not allow false professors and hypocrites to publicly represent the church and Christ. Also, see 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1!
5. **It also helps the church’s outreach to non-Christians.** It’s the church’s holy distinctness which is compelling to those non-Christians in whom the Spirit of God is moving (e.g., Matt. 5:10-16).

6. **It teaches non-Christians that God calls all men to repent, and there is an inside and outside of God's special, salvific love.** Again, Christ is gracious and welcoming, but he confronts people with a decision: "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12:30).
7. **It discourages Christian nominalism—Christians who don't want to be held accountable by Christ's body.** Christians who stubbornly want to serve and yet not be held accountable by the church body will get frustrated and go elsewhere. Yes, other churches might accept them on those terms, but each of us are to be faithful to God for our own turf, not someone else's.

## Is church membership wrongly exclusive?

### Answer

Tolerance and inclusivity are the quintessential postmodern virtues. It seems that the only way to be genuinely wrong in contemporary western society is to ever exclude anyone. Contemporary westerners are born cherishing particular conceptions of diversity, inclusion, and tolerance.

The problem is that *all* people are born sinners and therefore are excluded from the favor and fellowship of God. All people are born children of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3). So before we start arguing about whether or not church membership is wrongly exclusive, it needs to be said that the Bible portrays God as excluding *all of us* from fellowship with himself because of our sin. And the Bible teaches that all those who do not turn from their sin and trust in Christ will experience not only God's exclusion after they die, but his active punishment for their sins.

So is church membership exclusive? In one sense, yes, of course it is. Church membership is intended to draw a clear, bright line between the church and the world.

But is it *wrongly* exclusive? Not inherently (though right principles can be wrongly applied). Church membership is meant to *include* only Christians in order that the church would corporately draw a picture of the gospel it preaches. A clear distinction between the church and the world actually serves non-Christians by clarifying and commending the gospel. In fact a wrongly *inclusive* approach to church membership is just what non-Christians *don't* need, because it confuses the gospel, blurs the line between Christian and non-Christian, and can even help deceive non-Christians into thinking they're Christians when their lives demonstrate no fruit of having turned from their sin and trusted in Christ.