

Mission Point

New Member's Policy

I. Church Commitment:

In today's culture when commitment is such a rare thing, it shouldn't be a surprise that church membership is such a low priority to so many believers. Christians move from church to church, never submitting themselves to the care of elders and never committing themselves to a group of fellow believers. I believe this reflects a misunderstanding of the believer's responsibility to the body of Christ. And it also cuts one off from the many blessings and opportunities that flow from this commitment. It is essential for every Christian to understand what church membership is and why it matters.

Although Scripture does not contain an explicit command to formally join a local church, the biblical foundation for church membership is seen throughout the New Testament. This biblical basis can be seen most clearly in (1) the example of the early church, (2) the existence of church government, (3) the exercise of church discipline, and (4) the exhortation to mutual edification.

The idea of experiencing salvation without belonging to a local church is foreign to the New Testament. When individuals repented and believed in Christ, they were baptized and added to the church ([Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 16:5](#)). More than simply living out a private commitment to Christ, this meant joining together formally with other believers in a local assembly and devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer ([Acts 2:42](#)).

The epistles of the New Testament were written to churches. In the case of the few written to individuals—such as Philemon, Timothy and Titus—these individuals were leaders in churches. The New Testament epistles themselves demonstrate that the Lord assumed that believers would be committed to a local assembly. There is also evidence in the New Testament that just as there was a list of widows eligible for financial support ([1 Tim. 5:9](#)), there may also have been a list of members that grew as people were saved (cf. [Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 16:5](#)). In fact, when a believer moved to another city, his church often wrote a letter of commendation, not a letter of transfer, to his new church ([Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; Col. 4:10; cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-2](#)).

In the book of [Acts](#), much of the terminology fits only with the concept of formal church membership. Phrases such as “the whole congregation” ([6:5](#)), “the church in Jerusalem” ([8:1](#)), “the disciples” in Jerusalem ([9:26](#)), “in every church” ([14:23](#)), “the whole church” ([15:17](#)), and “the elders of the church” in Ephesus ([20:17](#)), all suggest recognizable church membership with well-defined boundaries (also see [1 Cor. 5:4; 14:23; and Heb. 10:25](#)).

II. Membership Qualifications:

When an individual becomes saved (according to [Romans 10:9-10, 13, John 5:24, 10:25-30, Eph. 1:13, 2:8-9, 1 John 5:11-13](#)), he automatically becomes a member of the body of Christ ([1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). To become a member of a church is to formally commit oneself to an identifiable, local body of believers who have joined together for specific, divinely ordained purposes. Baptism is also a qualification for membership, because its nature and it's the demonstrated obedience of the believer. The Ethiopian eunuch wondered what hindered him from being baptized ([Acts 8:36](#)). Philip told him that he must first believe ([Acts 8:37](#)). After the Philippian jailer got saved, he "was baptized, he and all his, straightway" ([Acts 16:33](#)). This is a pattern seen throughout the book of Acts. Someone believes in the Lord Jesus and then they get baptized. This is why baptism has been called the first act of obedience for the believer. Salvation and baptism are closely linked together because of the picture baptism represents ([Romans 6:4-5](#)). The act



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of baptism refers back to the commitment issue, if you will not commit to your first act of obedience then you will not be a faithful, attendant, giving or submissive to this local body. Therefore, this church places this requirement as part of the qualification for church membership, ([Acts 2:41](#)), (As also mapped out in our churches constitution under article IX Church Membership). Therefore, it is of the understanding of this church based on scripture and practice, that a person be saved and baptized in order to be a member of this local assembly.

III. Doctrinal Agreement:

There was no written doctrinal statement required for identification with assembly during the New Testament, as far as we can tell. While no verse can be found to demand conformity to scriptural teaching for church membership, it can be argued that any cause (doctrinal heresy) that was serious enough to expel a person from the church ([Titus 3:10](#)) is also a biblical ground to deny him church membership in the first place. Based on our statement of Faith of what we believe about the: scriptures, Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, man and sin, atonement for sin, freeness of salvation, eternal security, ordinances of the church, angels and Satan, resurrection and future events, these are the doctrinal issues which cause division and the acceptance of such doctrines become a prerequisite for membership. We may, as members, disagree on many lesser differences of interpretations (Constitution Article XI), but as members should be in agreement on the fundamentals of our doctrine of faith, as clearly stated in our constitution.

IV. Serving:

The main focus of a devoted Christian is to give glory to God in all they do ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)). One way we serve God and give Him glory is by witnessing to the lost and making disciples ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)). However, when we serve we are to serve as if we are serving God Himself ([Colossians 3:23-24](#)). We are commanded to serve in the local church by using our gifts to train, equip, edify, and admonish one another ([Romans 12:3-8](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-31](#), [1 Peter 4:10-11](#), [Galatians 6:10](#), [Eph. 4:11-16](#)), because Christ was our ultimate example of this ([John 13:14-17](#)). So in serving, we give glory to God by serving one another, with the gifts given by the Holy Spirit, as if we were serving Christ Himself.

V. Spiritual Gifts:

The Holy Spirit at salvation gives gifts to men, even though a believer will never possess all the gifts, each believer is however given at least one gift. There is a spiritual gift reference chart that shows all the gifts given but how they are used can be accomplished in many different ways. The way we use our gifts is identifying them, and praying and applying them to use. See the attached reference chart.



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VI. Giving:

Giving to the local assembly is a touchy subject for most. Though not commanded in the New Testament to give the principle is clearly seen, as in prayer and fasting. There is no command to pray or fast but Jesus spoke of these things as if you were going to do them anyway. We do not discipline, in any way, someone who does not give, but we show the giving principle to be clearly seen and admonish a believer to put their faith in action. Giving doesn't end with a number, though usually 1/10 is the biblical factor, but just like they didn't stop there. The aspects of giving are as follows:

- 1) It is a principle of sowing and reaping, seen in **2 Corinthians 9:6** (give little you will get little etc.)
 - 2) It is a principle of giving for a purpose, **2 Corinthians 9:7** (give glory to God, purpose for missionaries, giving to a building fund, etc.)
 - 3) It is a principle of Joy in Giving, **2 Corinthians 9:7** (were not to give if it causes us sorrow or pain in our mind or spirit and we are not to do it if it is because we have too, because its necessary.)
 - 4) It is a matter of stewardship, **1 Corinthians 4:2** (we are stewards of God's finances because He owns it all anyway, **Psalm 24:1, Proverbs 3:9, Ecc.5:19**, and it is for His glory He gives to us **Romans 11:36**).
- So when it comes to matters of giving we use this as a guide, our 10% should go to general budget, missions should not be part of that offering, and anything given to areas other than those two should be above the general and missions offering. All giving went through the local church, and the same principle applies today you general or tithe and basic faith promise missions should go through the local church.

VII. Church Discipline:

We believe that the responsibility and necessity of church discipline is clearly outline in scripture. Discipline has the divine authority of scripture and is vital to the purity of the church. There is a way to do and a way not to do church discipline, but it could be summed up in this, the church is to protect the authenticity and credibility as well as the purity of God's body (**1 Corinthians 5:6-7**). These actions are clearly defined in our constitution. Thus it is defined as the action of the Lord carrying out discipline through the action of the whole body through the leadership of the pastor and the spiritually mature. Similarly, this authority is seen as well in the action spelled out in **Matthew 18:18-19**.

VIII. Accountability:

We all need accountability (**Proverbs 27:17, Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:16, Ezekiel 33:7**), scripture holds all mankind accountable, we should hold one another accountable out of love, we need to be informed with all the factors. We have a constitution to protect the church, and individual believers, as well as keep a structure for accountability with finances etc., through an understanding of our churches constitution. Study the scriptures to understand what God wants us to do, and study our constitution so we all can be held accountable not only before God but before one another as well.



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IX. Growing:

As members in the same body we should be growing in two ways:

1) As commanded by scripture we are to grow in knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 3:14-18). This growing is not just sitting and being spoon fed by the pastor or other teachers, like a baby is spoon fed in a high chair (1 Peter 2:2, 1 Corinthians 3:2), it is growing and studying and applying God's word to your life.

2) We should grow together, each believer is a part of the same body, which is Christ's body, and as we edify and build up one another we should be doing things together there growing in knowledge of each other. Our knowledge of one another should help us sharpen and equip each other (Proverbs 27:17) to give God glory.

