

Family Matters
Welcome to the Family
Embracing Church Membership
Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / Jan. 13, 2019

I. Where Do You See Church Membership Commanded in the Bible?

Church membership is assumed and demonstrated from the very beginning of the church in the book of Acts and all through the letters to the churches in the New Testament.

A. They Had a Count of Who Was in the Church

Acts 2:41 "... and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Acts 2:47 "... and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

Acts 5:13-14 "¹³No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number."

B. Paul Refers to Those Who are Inside and Those Who are Outside the Church

Colossians 4:5 "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time."

See also **I Corinthians 5:12-13**, **I Thessalonians 4:10b-12**, and **I Timothy 3:7**.

C. Their Ability to Put Someone Out of the Church Presupposes an Official Sense of Who Had Chosen to Belong in the First Place

This was not just some casually thrown-together group.

The initial instructions that we have about practicing church discipline are spoken by Jesus Himself in **Matthew 18:15-17**. There must have been an official sense of who had chosen to join for them to be able to put someone out.

II. So Why Should I Join a Local Church?

A. Joining a Local Church Makes You a Part of What God's Been Doing from the Very Beginning

The book of Acts is the history of Christianity spreading across the known world through the start of local churches in specific cities that were filled with specific Christians who had names and were committed to loving other Christians in that church as well as reaching out to unbelievers around them.

B. Joining a Local Church Boldly Identifies You with Jesus and His Followers

When you're passionate about something you want to be joined with others that are also passionate about that same thing so that you can drill down into the particulars of that one subject.

C. Joining a Local Church Moves You Out of Self-Centered Isolation and into Sacrificial Love Like Nothing Else

Real maturity is forged in the midst of relationships that are not all easy and do not all go your way.

God designed the local church to be a greenhouse for practicing unselfish love and preferring people you might never have choose to be around.

D. Joining a Local Church Says that You're Serious about Spiritual Growth

1. You're Submitting to Specific Spiritual Leaders in Your Life

Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

I Peter 5:1-2 "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder... ² Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be..."

2. You're Willing to Invest in Specific Believers Around You

There are 58 'one another' commands in the Bible and most of them are found in the epistles that were written to local churches.

E. Joining a Local Church Says You Believe Jesus' Promise about the Church is Still Greater than All the Problems You'll Find When You Get There

Believing Jesus' promise about the local church is not easy to do unless you take Him at His word.

Matthew 16:18 "... I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

The reason Jesus could make such a bold promise is because He knew that He was going to purchase that church – His bride – with His own blood and launch her into this world of mess as His main means of redeeming it!

Acts 20:28 "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Join a local church and lay down your selfish desires by loving and serving others that might hard to love and might not be easy to serve.