

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: WHY IT MATTERS

Church membership is not man's idea; it is assumed throughout the Bible. While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are positionally members of the universal Church, we believe participation and commitment in a local church body should be a normal act of obedience for all true believers in Jesus Christ in light of the passages below.

THE CHURCH'S LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Hebrews 13:17 states that Christians are to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account." Without membership, to whom are the elders accountable for shepherding before God? We believe that membership defines the scope of authority and accountability for local church leaders.

In addition, this verse helps us answer the question: To which leaders should believers submit? Instead of submitting to anyone with the title "elder" from any church, membership provides direction on the specific elders believer should submit to and why.

THE "ONE ANOTHER" PASSAGES

Hebrews 10:24-25 states that we should "stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as it is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..." Without membership, to whom are we called to meet with and encourage on a daily basis?

THE CARE OF THE CHURCH

1 Timothy 5:9-10 provides instruction regarding care for widows. Without membership, how does the widows' enrollment make sense?

Also Acts 20:28 says to the church elders, "Pay careful attention to yourself and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained by his own blood" Membership places you under the spiritual care and protection of godly leaders who are keeping watch over a specific local body.

THE CORRECTION OF THE CHURCH

Lastly, 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 describes sexual immorality occurring within a local gathering and the removal of the offender. Without membership, how are we to practice church discipline?

Also Matthew 18:15-17 states when a brother sins against you and does not listen after multiple witnesses address his fault, you are to involve the church. Without membership who constitutes "the church?" Who decides when someone is to be treated as an outsider ("a Gentile and a tax collector" v.17) and lovingly called back to repentance? We believe that membership provides a clear process and path for care, correction, and restoration when a member is active in habitual sin.

THE METAPHORS OF THE CHURCH

Throughout the Scriptures, we see the Church referenced as the family of God, the body of Christ, and the flock of God. (Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 5:2)

To not join a church is to, in effect, say:

- I don't want to be a part of His family (e.g., orphaned)
- I don't want to be a part of His body (e.g., dismembered)
- I don't want to be a part of His flock (e.g., isolated)
- I don't want to be a part of His kingdom (e.g., exiled)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- How did you decide whether or not to commit to becoming a Member at Outpost?
- Would you have any hesitations about being in community with someone who has not completed the Membership process at Outpost? If so, what are the reasons?
- Take a moment to pray for the Leadership at Outpost:
 - that they would be fully yielded to God's Spirit as they serve and lead this body,
 - for protection for their families, and
 - for wisdom and strength to lead biblically and courageously.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Scripture to read: 1 Corinthians 5:1-12; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts 2:37-41; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:3-17