

Membership: What is it?

Introduction:

We live in an age where membership to anything seems to go against our culture. Perhaps there are exception to this, but for the most part, over the past 20 years we have moved from a culture of belonging to a culture of autonomy of the family.

When we enter into the body of Christ at salvation, we are joined as members of that body.

1Cor. 12:13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

When we join Christ's body, we are joining to that which Christ said he'd build.

Matt. 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This word church (ecclesia) is used in the universal since and the local sense. (Compare to 1 Cor. 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23)

In the New Testament what was the church's purpose?

Receiving God's Word,
serving one another,
edifying each other by use of spiritual gifts.

Eph. 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,
Eph. 4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
Eph. 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Notice the two pronged proposes. Work of the ministry and building up the body of Christ.

Participating in the ordinances
Proclaiming the gospel to the lost

Is it biblical?

In the New Testament being a believer meant being part of the early church.

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

Acts 2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 5:14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Acts 16:5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

The New Testament is written to churches. A few were written to men who were church leaders.

We have evidence there was a formal structure in terms of tracking people. (The ones previously mentioned and 1Tim. 5:9 ¶ Let a widow be enrolled [some translations 'added to the list'...])

What's the purpose and point of committing instead of just attending?

A commitment cuts both ways. Not only is it a commitment of the member to the leaders of the church, but it is a commitment of the leaders of the church to the members to care for them.

Heb. 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.

Read 1 Cor. 12:1-27 concerning membership . . .

So why is filling out an application so important? It's not! It is the way our culture recognizes a commitment between two parties. It's more than just a membership, it's a covenant. We, the believers, all covenant with each other. We hold each other accountable. Remember it cuts both ways!

The elders have recently divided up the membership for care purposes. This involves a relationship between the under shepherds and the congregation. Accountability, not just for the members, but for the shepherds.

Membership is just a formal way of asking for and expecting that accountability.

Prov. 27:17 "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."