

Does the Bible teach Church  
Membership?

# The NT

- Makes no explicit statement about people being Church members
- Provides no example of any process of becoming a member of a local body: no pattern for transferring membership, etc.
- Upon a profession of faith in Christ, and baptism by immersion, people became part of that local assembly

Since this is so, many have argued that there is Church membership is unnecessary

- “Since salvation places us in the body of Christ, there is no such thing as local Church membership.”
- “Since the Bible doesn’t teach it, there’s no reason to join a local Church.”

But the very existence and operation of local Churches implies a “formal” connection with a local Church

- From the very beginning, the Church had some form of record of those associated with it.
- Acts 2.41, Acts 2.47. Added: “join,” “gather with any company.”
- Acts 4.4. The number: “the count.” The Greek word is “arithmos”
- Acts 5.13-14

- The very word “Church” implies membership. The “ecclesia” was an assembly of qualified participants.
- The operation of the early Church suggests some form of membership: Acts 6.1-7
- Local Churches are the Body of Christ, and local Churches wield Biblical authority in the lives of God’s people
- Matthew 18.16-18
- I Corinthians 5.1-13 / II Corinthians 2.1-8 (“of many”—the majority)

- The fact that the Church is Christ's body suggests membership
- I Corinthians 12.1-27. It is true, in one sense, that I Corinthians 12 describes the entirety of Christ's body. But Paul's context is clear that what is equally true, is that the Church in Corinth is Christ's body—and they are “members in particular.” Part of the membership

- The way God speaks about our mutual interaction, and spiritual leadership, suggests membership.
- I Peter 5.1-3
- (We should recognize that some people will avoid membership in an attempt to avoid submission)
- Our practice has been to encourage membership, but to allow faithful non-members limited levels of involvement