

## Is Church Membership Biblical?

1. All true believers, no matter where they may be are the body of Christ, the universal church
  - a) membership is established at salvation
  - b) God alone adds to it
  - c) He perfectly knows all those who are His
  - d) nominal believers have no part in it

(1 Co 1:9; Ac 2:46-47; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 2:19)

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2. As true believers, we have our names recorded in the Lamb's book of life in heaven. Should we be on a local church's membership list as well?
 

(Lk 10:20; Rev 13:8)
3. The unity and fellowship among believers is lived out and experienced practically on the local and personal level
  - each individual local church is to function as a microcosm of the universal church
  - each individual believer must discern to whom he will extend fellowship and which local church he will join
4. The local church is a group of Christians who meet, minister and serve together as one body
  - there are many such churches not just one
  - some form of formal membership seems to be indicated in the Bible
  - it seems to be clear who belongs to and is a part of which local church

(1 Th 1:1; Rom 16:1-5; Col 4:7-9)

- \* There are a number of things in the NT that would be diminished or denied if there were no definable local church membership
- 1) the church is to discipline its members
    - the "church" is the final court of appeal
    - if there is no church membership, how can the group be defined that finally renders a disciplinary decision?
    - the "church" must be an identifiable group to handle such a weighty matter
  - 2) excommunication exists
    - the simple fact that "removing" exists implies church membership
    - there is an "in the church" group and an "outside the church" group
    - one "in the church" can be removed
    - an official removal would be impossible if there were no clear accountable membership
  - 3) believers are required to submit to their leaders
    - the Scripture commands submission and obedience to elders and pastors
    - how does this leadership and this submission work if there is no membership defining who is to be led and who the chosen leaders are

(Heb 13:17; 1 Thes 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17)

- 4) Shepherds are required to care for their flocks
  - they must take care of the flock allotted to their charge
  - #2819 κληρος *kleros*  
 = those assigned to one  
 = what portion one is to care for
  - they know exactly for whom they are responsible, those for whom they will be required to give an account

(Ac 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2-3; Heb 13:17)
- 5) The metaphor of the Body
  - the original meaning of the word "member" is the member of a body

~~~~~ (1 Cor 12:12-31) ~~~~~

### CONCLUSIONS:

1. Belonging to a local church includes blessings and privileges as well as obligations and accountability
2. However these lose their meaning unless there is some formal way to identify who is in and who does not belong to a local body
3. Church membership is not directly addressed in the Word, neither decreed nor forbidden
4. Perhaps then, each local church leadership must, before the Lord, for itself discern exactly how they will determine and structure who belongs and who doesn't