

MEMBERSHIP/BAPTISM | WEEK 2

Joining membership: Covenant

There are all kinds of phrases that people use to describe what it means to be a Christian who is part of a local church:

“Be the church.”

“Don’t be a lone ranger Christian.”

“Embody what this church is all about.”

You’ve probably heard these phrases and some others. But what does it mean to be a thriving part of God’s people?

Is it enough just to have a personal faith in Jesus without having anything to do with his Church?

Just as the very first Christians were members of a local gathering of God’s people called a church (see Matt. 18:17; Acts 2:41, 47; 11:26; 14:23), so anybody who chooses Christ is also choosing to join His people—which we do through a local church.

Read/Think | What happens when Christians submit themselves to a local church as the expression that they are part of Christ’s body? Look up the passages below and note the spiritual result of Christians being a healthy part of a church:

Eph. 4:11-16: Result: _____

Gal. 6:10: Result: _____

Rom. 12:13: Result: _____

1 Thess. 5:11: Result: _____

Heb. 13:17: Result: _____

Read/Think | Read the statements below about how the early church expected Christians to become a known part of a local assembly. Look up the reference passage in Scripture. Do you think that formal identification as a member of a local church is important?

1. Once a Christian formally and publicly identified with Christ through baptism, entering into a local church was the next step. **Read Acts 2:41**
2. There was no such thing as a “lone ranger Christian”: Christians met together to worship and share life. **Read Acts 2:46-27**
3. The personal identities of local church members were known to the watching world—even persecutors. **Read Acts 8:3**
4. Local churches were planted throughout the known world, each with its own elders who oversaw specific members. **Read Acts 14:21-23**
5. Church leaders were made responsible for a specific “flock.” **Read 1 Peter 5:1-3**
6. Christians were responsible to submit to specific leaders who oversaw them. **Read Hebrews 13:17**
7. Christians had authority and responsibility to exclude false teachers and unrepentant participants from the church. (Obviously, you can’t expel someone from a church unless they belong to it in the first place.) **Read Matthew 18:17 and 1 Cor. 5:5, 11-13.**

Do | If you want to learn more about why a covenant is the means by which our church has chosen to demonstrate our commitment to one another, read/listen to Pastor Mark Vroegop’s sermon, “Church Covenant Renewal: Why, What, and How?” (Feb 1, 2015). <http://www.yourchurch.com/sermon/church-covenant-renewal-why-what-and-how/>

At the bottom of that sermon manuscript, you’ll find the complete text of the Member Covenant. Read and reflect on it.