

WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

When you are united to Christ, you are united to his body the church (1 Cor. 12:12-26). If you want to stay connected to Christ, you have to stay connected to his body. While local church membership isn't explicitly taught in Scripture, it is absolutely assumed. Biblical authors assume that local bodies of believers share a covenant commitment to Jesus and to one another and that it's only in this context that we can live out our discipleship to Jesus. Below are a few biblical reasons why membership matters.

Partnership for the Gospel: The church is not a building, a place, or an event, but a people who are partnering together in the mission to make disciples who make disciples so that God's glory covers the earth as waters cover the sea (Phil. 1:5; Matt. 28:16-20; Hab. 2:14). By definition a partnership is a covenant relationship. It requires ownership and commitment.

A Body Has Official Parts & Members: Paul assumes that, like a physical body, a local church body is made up of members who belong to one another (1 Cor. 12:14-20) and need one another (1 Cor. 12:21-26). Church membership is a way of saying, "I belong to *this* body" and "I need *this* body and *this* body needs me." It's a way of joining yourself to a church and officially saying, "I want to be part of this" (1 Cor. 12:15, 24; Eph. 4:16).

Who You're Responsible For: There are over 50 "one another" passages in the New Testament that describe how Christians are to live together in community. Church membership tells us who we are responsible to care for and live in community with (Gal. 6:1-2; Col. 3:12-15).

Who's Responsible For You: Local church membership tells us which pastors we are called to follow and which pastors are responsible for watching over and giving an account for our souls (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:2).

To sum up, the Bible assumes local church membership as a way of saying, "This is who I'm stacking hands with in partnership for the gospel. This is where I belong. This is who I'm responsible for. This is who is responsible for me."