

Why Join A Church?

To join or not to join that is the question!

While there are reasons for not joining a church, are there better reasons for joining a church!

This brochure is provided to help you make a good and informed decision concerning church membership.

Reasons given for not joining a church

1. One can worship God without the church.
2. I've had it with the church, for there are too many hypocrites and too many painful experiences.
3. I just need Jesus. Jesus saves, not the church.
4. I'm doing okay in my spiritual life without the church.
5. I can get all I need by attending church; I don't need to join it.

Although we can always find reasons for why we are the way we are or feel the way we do, we need to be open to other possibilities and other opportunities. We need to ask ourselves are there better reasons for joining a church than not joining one.

Thoughts To Consider

If we claim to have Christ as our Lord and Savior, then we have submitted to the authority of Christ. The issue of whether we should join a church or not should be based on what the Scriptures say.

All our knowledge of God and His church is conveyed to us by His special revelation—the Bible. It is from the Scriptures that we discover the church is more than a place to worship; it's more than a building; it's more than an organization; it's an organism. It is the body of Christ. Although we realize this is used metaphorically, this is the Apostle Paul's favorite description of the church. The church is the body of Christ and Christ is the head of the body—the church (Col 1:18, 24; 2:19; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:12-31; Rom. 12:5).

The church must function as the body of Christ to fulfill Christ's commands and accomplish God's will. When a church functions as a healthy body, she displays the gospel to the world. Through the church the world sees the reality of God and the gospel's power to bring people of all vocations, backgrounds, races, and social standings together into one family.

Before we look at what the Bible says about joining a church, let's look at some insights from the Bible related to the objections often given.

Objection #1

“One can worship God without the church.”

This is true; we can worship God anywhere. We can worship Him deep in a coal mine or high on a mountain top. We can worship Him in solitude or in a crowded Christian concert.

The word “worship,” however, is derived from a Greek word that has to do with giving “worth to.” Worship is about recognizing God's worth or value. The depth of our worship is not based on the thrill we get out of it or the devotion we put in it, but the value we give to God. If our worship is true, then our worship will value God above everything and everyone. It will value what God says about His church and the believer's role in it.

Objection #2

“I've had it with the church. Too many hypocrites and too many painful experiences.”

The Bible acknowledges tares among the wheat, but what better place for tares or hypocrites than sitting under the preaching of the Word. Hypocrites need the gospel and Christians living Christ-like lives before them.

It's true that church experiences can be painful. Not all churches are true churches, but even biblical churches are filled with imperfect people. There are no perfect churches or perfect Christians. However, the church is essential in helping believers become like Christ, which includes loving the unlovable. It's within the framework of the church that God uses believers to help mold one another into the image of Christ. In Matthew 18, Christ provides guidelines for working out problems among believers, but conflict resolution (growth), can only occur if believers are more committed to the body of Christ—the church than they are to their own individual likes and dislikes. When we abandon the church because of our pain or frustration, we take the easy way out. The cost of following Jesus includes the pains sometimes inflicted on us within the church. It is in the painful times of life that we learn best how to die to self, so that we might live for the glory of God and the good of His body—the church.

Objection #3

“Jesus saves, not the church. I just need Jesus.”

Jesus is the only way to Father. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Being a member of a church won't save us. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us and converts us. But the church is necessary to nurture us.

The spiritual gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit are for the edifying of the body—the church. We are nurtured by the gifts of others and our gift helps to nurture others. Many of the gifts identified in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; and Ephesians 4 can only be effective in the nurturing aspect when they are done within a specified body of believers who meets and functions together on a regular basis—a local church.

Objection # 4

“I’m doing okay in my spiritual life without the church.”

Compared to what? When we set the standard as to what is “okay”, we will always be doing okay. What if there is much more to the Christian life than what we are aware of? If God’s Word directs us to be a part of a local church and we’re not, then we can’t be doing okay spiritually. If we are *indifferent* to God’s will for us, are we okay?

Objection # 5

“I can get all I need by attending church. I don’t need to join it.”

The Bible reveals that the church is not only important to the Christian life, it’s essential. There are no allowances in the Bible for “Lone Ranger” Christians. The apostle Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their missionary journeys, but under the authority of the church at Antioch.

Church attendance is for whosoever will come, Christians and non-Christians. Church membership however, is only for members of God’s family. We are adopted into God’s family when we repent of our sins and accept His Son, Jesus, into our lives as Lord and Savior.

The big question

Why should a follower of Christ be a member of a church? To answer this question we have to understand the church as God defines it and church membership as He has designed it. A companion brochure entitled, *“Understanding The Church”* is a necessary read for understanding and properly evaluating the issue of why join a church.

Now let’s look at some reasons for joining a church. I believe the Bible is clear about the value of church membership.

1) It will help us understand if we are truly living as a Christian.

The man in 1 Corinthians 5 most likely thought of himself as a Christian. He probably went to church regularly. He most likely did all the things a person would do in a church community.

This is why Paul had to write and tell them to take action. They had to make it clear to him, for his sake, that his actions were that of a non-Christian and unacceptable. It is the loving thing to do. By joining a church we make ourselves accountable to God by being accountable to His church. A church cannot legally take action unless a person has agreed to conduct themselves according to the standard of the body. When we join a church we accept the standard, the Church Covenant, and promise to abide by it.

2) A second reason is it gives evidence of your commitment to Christ. Thus it becomes a witness for others

When we accept Christ, we accept His lordship over us. The idea of becoming a follower of Christ is that we have forsaken all to follow Christ.

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it’” (Matt. 16:24-25).

The main way His lordship can be played out in a practical way is by joining a church. By doing so we commit ourselves to a physical body—the body of Christ.

3) A third reason to join a church is that it reveals a humble spirit.

We should join a church because we know that we are weak and need the encouragement and sometimes the rebuke of other believers. God hates pride, including a type of spiritual pride that says I don't need anyone to help me with my spiritual life. Humility is essential to the Christian life. If Christ lives within us, the humility of Christ will be revealed in us. Only the humble can and will submit to Christ's Lordship. Only the humble realize their weakness and the danger of falling along the way. *"Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:4).*

4) A fourth reason to join a church is to help her become a bride that is without spot or wrinkle for Christ.

The church is an important part of God's plan and every believer plays a role in shaping the church according to God's plan. The church is designed to help us be the Christian God wants us to be. We are also to help others within the church to become the Christian God wants them to be.

"so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:12-16).

The church is full of people with various backgrounds, personalities, and hang-ups. The only way members of such a body can live in harmony is by living in obedience to His Word and by being empowered by His Spirit. Our commitment to the body—the church—forces us to put on the attributes of Jesus in order to live in harmony within the body of Jesus. We are thus motivated to become like Jesus in order to accomplish this.

Christ-likeness is the key to becoming the bride that is without spot or wrinkle for Christ.

Church membership and being shaped into the image of Christ is not always easy and can sometimes be painful, but it is the will of God and it is worth it in the end, for we are created to please God, not ourselves.

Relevant Verses

Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 8:1; 14:23; 15:22; 20:28; Romans 12:1-18; 16:5; 1 Cor. 4:17; 5:1-2, 12; 6:4; 10:17; 11:18; 12:12, 28; 15:9; Acts 9; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:24; 4:16; 1 Tim. 3:15; and 3 John 1:5-10