

“Placing membership” in any local church congregation is **not** necessary for salvation. However, local church membership is expedient and has practical value. Membership in the local church comes with both privilege and responsibility. It is a concept that aligns with essential biblical principles such as commitment, accountability, and unity.

Here are some scriptures that illustrate those principles:

Identification

It enables the leadership and the rest of the church to know who the members are. It is an opportunity to agree with the church that Jesus is Lord:

Matt. 10:32a: *“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.”*

It is also an opportunity to state a personal commitment to follow Him:

Josh. 24:15b: *“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”*

Protection

God provides authority in our lives for our own good and for our protection. He never gives authority without accountability. The leadership of a local church congregation is responsible before God to provide spiritual protection for the people in it.

Acts 20:28: *“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”*

1 Pet. 5:2-3: *“...shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”*

Submission

Membership means a willing submission to the eldership of the local church, following them as they follow Christ. Outsiders do not have this responsibility.

Heb. 13:17: *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

1 Thess. 5:12-13: *“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.”*

1 Tim. 5:17: *“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”*

Church Discipline

Scripture shows us that those in the church are subject to a disciplinary process that does not apply to outsiders.

Matt. 18:15-17: *“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”*

1 Cor. 5:12-13a: *“For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside.”*

Gal. 6:1-2: *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Benevolence

Membership impacts the collective ministry and provision of the congregation.

Gal 6:10: *“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*

Acts 2:44-45: *“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”*

See also 1 Tim. 5:9-16.

Accountability

The human body, to which scripture likens the Church, has no detached rogue organs. Membership reminds us of our individual duty to the rest of the church. Each member has a role and a responsibility. When this is recognized, the church is strengthened.

1 Cor. 10:24: *“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”*

Phil. 2:4: *“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”*

We are to have the mindset of contributors, not consumers.

John 6:26: *“Jesus answered them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.’”*

Organization

Membership promotes effectiveness in the mission of the church.

Phil. 1:27: *“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel...”*

Ecc. 4:9-12: *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

Unity

Membership means a closeness that is ultimately spiritual in nature.

1 Cor. 12:26: *“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.”*

Eph. 2:19: *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...”*

See also Acts 2:42-47.

Commitment

Scripture thoroughly conveys the need for individual commitment on the part of the believer.

Matt. 16:24: *“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”*

See also Luke 9:57-62.

Commitment expressed through membership means denying the self in a very practical sense with regard to how the individual relates to the rest of the local body of believers:

Rom. 12:10-16: *“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.”*

Encouragement

Membership carries with it the understanding of mutual interdependence; the individual believer has a responsibility to contribute to the spiritual well-being of the whole, and in return can expect to be nourished and strengthened by that which the group provides.

Heb. 10:24-25: *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*

Heb. 3:12-13: *“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*