



# Discipleship Training Program

## Christianity 101 – Lesson Thirteen

### Church Membership

#### Memory Text

**Acts 2:47** *“Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

Every true believer in Christ in due time must consider the question of church membership. Many times church membership is looked upon negatively for various reasons. Let us consider what the Scriptures have to say concerning this area.

### Was There Some Record Of Membership In The Early Church?

The Gospels and the Book of Acts imply that there was some definite evidence of church membership. The disciples of Jesus and the early believers were actually numbered and accounted for.

- A. Jesus chose **12** Apostles, named and numbered
  - a. **Luke 6:12-16** *“<sup>12</sup>And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup>And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; <sup>14</sup>Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup>Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, <sup>16</sup>And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.”*
- B. Jesus later chose **70** others as His own
  - a. **Luke 10:1-2** *“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. <sup>2</sup>Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.”*
- C. Over **500** brethren saw Jesus in His ascension
  - a. **I Corinthians 15:3-6** *“<sup>3</sup>For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup>And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: <sup>5</sup>And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: <sup>6</sup>After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.”*
- D. Before Pentecost **120** disciples gathered in the Upper Room
  - a. **Acts 1:15** *“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)”*
  - b. (The number of the names were about 120)

- E. At and after Pentecost, multitudes were brought to Christ and into the Church which He said He would build
- F. There were added unto them (the 120) about 3000 souls
  - a. **Acts 2:41, 47** *"<sup>41</sup>Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. <sup>47</sup>Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*
- G. About 5000 believed also
  - a. **Acts 4:4** *"Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand."*
- H. The number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem
  - a. **Acts 6:7** *"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."*
- I. At least 10,000 believers were numbered in these Scriptures

## How Does One Become A Member Of Christ's Church?

There are two aspects to church membership in the book of Acts.

- A. **Spiritual** membership
  - a. One cannot join Christ's church, like joining a club, etc.
  - b. **Acts 5:13** *"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them."*
    - i. – In the Early Church, the members were added (Gk. "prostithemi": to put to, to add, or to place beside) to the Lord
  - c. **Acts 5:14** *"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"*
  - d. **Acts 11:24** *"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."*
  - e. One must join in the Spirit, by the Spirit, to the Lord to be added to the church, universal and spiritual.
  - f. This is of first and primary importance!
    - i. **I Corinthians 6:17** *"But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."*
- B. **Practical** Membership
  - a. There must also be a visible and practical expression of church membership as seen in Acts. This is seen in belonging to "the church local".
    - i. **Acts 2:41,47** *"<sup>41</sup>Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. <sup>47</sup>Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*
      - 1. Added to the **Lord**
        - a. **Acts 5:14** *"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"*

- b. **Acts 11:24** *"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."*
- 2. Added to **them**
  - a. **Acts 2:41** *"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."*
- 3. Added to the **Church**
  - a. **Acts 2:47** *"Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."*
- b. One can have church membership in any local church or denomination, but one must be added to the Lord first, otherwise church membership is not recognized by Christ. However, a practical expression of membership is evidenced in being added to some New Testament local church.
- c. **Acts 2:37,38** lays down the standard and evidences for New Testament Church membership.
  - i. <sup>37</sup>*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? <sup>38</sup>Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."*
- d. These have never changed – in God's mind!
- e. These evidences were tangible and visible.

## Is It Scriptural To Have Some Kind Of Church Roll Or Records?

Yes! Old Testament and New Testament refer to books where the names of God's people were kept for records. It would be impossible to fully take care of God's sheep if no one knew where they were, or if they really belonged to some local church.

### A. **Old** Testament

- a. The Israelites had their names in the Books of Genealogy of the nation. They were numbered before the lord. **Numbers 1-2**
- b. The Levites were also numbered before the Lord before they could minister in the priestly offices. **Numbers 3**
- c. Every one numbered in Israel had to be redeemed with silver.
  - i. **Exodus 30:11-16** <sup>11</sup>*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>12</sup>When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. <sup>13</sup>This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. <sup>14</sup>Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty*

years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. <sup>15</sup>The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls. <sup>16</sup>And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.”

d. The remnant from Babylon had to be registered in the book in order to minister in the priesthood.

i. **Ezra 2:62-63** <sup>62</sup>These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. <sup>63</sup>And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.”

ii. **Nehemiah 7**

B. **New** Testament

a. The Church of the Firstborn have their names written in heaven

i. **Hebrews 12:22-24** <sup>22</sup>But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, <sup>23</sup>To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, <sup>24</sup>And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

b. The redeemed of all ages have their names also written in the Book of Life

i. **Philippians 4:3** “And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”

ii. **Revelation 13:8** <sup>8</sup>And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

iii. **Revelation 20:12-15** <sup>12</sup>And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. <sup>13</sup>And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. <sup>14</sup>And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup>And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

iv. **Revelation 21:27** “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

God keeps records! God keeps the names and numbers of the saints in His roll! If God Himself does this, then there should be no problem if finite man does likewise! God knows who is in His book and who is not.

Note: Legal requirements stipulate that proper records of membership be kept in relation to church funds, holding of property, taxes, etc. This cannot be just an invisible, mystical method of record keeping!

## Why Do Many People Reject Practical Church Membership?

Various reasons may be mentioned:

- A. **Fear** of being hurt
- B. **Legalism**
- C. Do not believe it is **scriptural**
- D. Not **submissive** in spirit
- E. Desire to be **self**-governing, self-directing, lawless
- F. Do not want to **support** the church financially, tithes and offerings
- G. Do not desire to come under **correction**, discipline or protection
- H. Do not want to be **committed** to anything local or visible

## What Are Some Of The Advantages Of Practical Church Membership?

- A. **Security** – The family of God; protection from “wolves”
- B. **Fellowship**; sense of belonging; company
- C. **Spiritual** nourishment of the Word
- D. **Discipline**, correction if necessary
- E. **Ministry** of life, healing and health by members of the Body
- F. **Communion** table; life
- G. **Love**, care and concern in a practical way by the oversight

One cannot expect to receive all the blessings and benefits of the Lord's Church when one is not willing to be committed to the responsibilities of membership! Membership may be transferred to other local church if the person moves.

## How May The Local Church Membership Be Confirmed?

- A. By extending the **right hand** of fellowship
  - a. **Galatians 2:8-9** <sup>8</sup>*(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)* <sup>9</sup>*And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”*

- B. By a **verbal** commitment or **public** affirmation, whereby the believer enters into covenant relationship and is willing to receive the privileges, assume the responsibilities and accept the discipline of the local church of which he is a member
- a. **Hebrews 6:16,17** *"An oath for confirmation..."*
  - b. **Ecclesiastes 5:4-5** *"When thou vowest a vow, defer not to pay it..."*
  - c. To commit oneself is *"to pledge; to entrust; to put in custody or charge; to bring together."*
  - d. This confirms to the whole congregation that this person is a recognized and responsible member of the church and is to be received as such. It confirms that both leadership and membership are committed to each other.
  - e. Note: Confirmation may be experienced several times in a believer's life.
    - i. Confirmation after confession of faith at water baptism.
      1. **I Corinthians 1:6-10** *"<sup>6</sup>Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: <sup>7</sup>So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: <sup>8</sup>Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. <sup>10</sup>Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."*
    - ii. Confirmation by being received into church membership.
    - iii. Confirmation by the laying on of hands and presbytery.
      1. **I Timothy 1:18** *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;"*
      2. **I Timothy 4:14** *"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."*
      3. **I Timothy 5:22** *"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure."*
      4. **II Timothy 1:6** *"Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands."*
    - iv. Confirmation at time of ordination.
      1. **Acts 6:6** *"Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."*
      2. **Acts 13:1-4** *"<sup>1</sup>Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup>As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. <sup>3</sup>And when they had*

*fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. <sup>4</sup>So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."*

- v. Other times as the Holy Spirit directs
- f. Confirmation, then, is a means of grace whereby members of the local church are strengthened, settled and established in the faith of Jesus Christ and committed to the will of God.

