



## Discipleship 101 New Member Lesson #7 Why Become a Member?

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### Introduction:

*“ . . . that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”*

[John 17: 21, 23](#)

### Oneness:

Jesus prayed fervently and intimately to His Heavenly Father just before His crucifixion, and part of His prayer is for the oneness of what would become the Christian Church. He didn't pray for Evangelicals, Catholics, Methodists, Assemblies of God, Apostolics, Baptists or any denomination – He prayed for believers in Christ. Becoming a member of the one true Christian Church is paramount. That is only accomplished on a person-by-person basis through the local church, whatever its present-day affiliation or denomination.

Can you become friends with believers in other geographical regions? Other cities? Other States? In this age of internet communication, the answer for the first time is 'Yes!' But if you need a friend to help with your housework because you're sick, or someone needs a meal prepared during a time of crisis, or you need to borrow a ride because your car just quit running, then you need brothers and sisters in Christ you can see and touch and physically lean on. You need church family who know you because you have committed to each other; members who think with the oneness of [the mind of Christ](#).

[Note: The majority of material in lessons #7 through 9 on membership I gleaned almost entirely from Pastor Kelvin Lott. It is with great appreciation and thankfulness that I utilize his hard work to add to these three membership-specific lessons in the discipleship course material – Andy Madonio]

### Why Become A Member?

In the Old Testament God worked through the nation of Israel. In the New Testament age, God's plan and agency through which He is reaching the world is the Church (His Body) in general and the local church in particular. The church did not take the place of Israel, but we (Gentiles) were grafted into the “natural olive tree” ([Romans 11:17-24](#)) and have become partakers, caretakers and proclaimers of the blessings of God promised to Abraham.

So in the language of the Bible, the Church of Jesus, the Christian Church, is analogous to a body, called simply the “Body of Christ” in scripture. This analogy is clear and revealing. A body is healthy and strong when all parts are functioning properly, and conversely, a body is weak and limited if any part is not working as it should. Read carefully the following passages the Apostle Paul wrote to two of the churches he planted to understand the concept of the church body.

*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*

[1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)

Here are some important paraphrased excerpts: The body is a unit made up of many parts. God has arranged every part of this church body just as He wanted to. God has combined the members of this church body so that there is no division, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

As I write this, I am living on pain medication because I need a root canal procedure. The nerves of my tooth are causing a pain in my head similar to a nail hammered into my skull. It is debilitating enough that my entire body is functioning with great difficulty. This tooth, or rather a couple of tiny nerve endings, is effecting my whole body.

Paul is saying that the Church should be so close, so knitted together, an event touching one member touches everyone – good or bad. This is oneness, closeness, and fellowship. Jesus prayed for this in [John 17](#).

The apostle has more to say:

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

## [Ephesians 4:11-16](#)

Building up the body of Christ until we reach unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus, until we are mature, able to resist improper teaching that is sure to come, not from the ignorant, but from purposeful schemers. This body should grow in love as each member does his work. “Sounds great,” you say, “so how can we achieve this?” Commitment. Membership.

### **Membership Promotes Organization & Order:**

Without order, the church tends towards chaos. Read [Acts 6:1-7](#) to see the continuing effects of the inherent sinful tendencies of man since the fall. In this early Church example, correction came from the Church leadership choosing wise, spirit-filled men of God to organize things effectively. The scriptures are clear that God works through order, organization and structure ([1 Corinthians 14:33](#)). God has always chosen leaders (prophets, judges, kings, apostles, disciples, pastors) to shepherd His flock, the members of His body, and maintain order.

### **Membership Facilitates the Growth & Building of God's Household:**

Members are part of a team, a family. The analogies of Paul in [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#) clearly teach that the individual part is never fully satisfied until it functions as a committed part of the whole body. Until my root canal was completed, my body was not content.

### **Membership Helps Us to Commit Ourselves to One Another in Love:**

Jesus, in [John 13:34-35](#), and [John 15:12](#) states that our commitment to one another will be demonstrated by our acts of love and that this will be what defines us and “stamps” us as His disciples – what the unbelievers will notice. It’s like the commitment of the marriage bond. You might sacrifice to help someone in need simply because it’s the right thing to do, but when you love someone, you have already committed to them and are willing to give of yourself whatever is necessary for the other.

### **Membership Helps Meet Our Need for Belonging:**

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

[Acts 2: 42-47](#)

The **red** word in the passage above is *koinonia*, a Greek word meaning fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, and social intercourse – all indicating close personal involvement with others. Koinonia can also mean sharing with others, providing a gift or contribution that exhibits proof of fellowship. Early Church members shared “everything in common” so no one would be in need.

**Membership Places Us In a Position of Accountability & Discipline:**

“Well, this discipline doesn’t sound so pleasing,” you might say. It is clear that we cannot truly be accountable without the commitment of belonging, and discipline only works under the covering of a long-term commitment. Someone once said, “rules without relationship breed rebellion.” Membership fosters relationships of accountability.

**Membership Allows Us the Privilege of Serving:**

[Ephesians 4:11-16](#) clearly teaches that we will not grow up in Christ until we find and exercise our talents and giftings in service to God and to others. The local church will only grow as large and strong as the individual members who do their part. At Rochester First A/G, you must be a member to serve in ministry.

**Membership Allows Us to Pool Our Resources to Have a Greater Impact:**

Pooled resources allow us to contribute to local and world **missions**. With strong committed members, we can be more effective at **evangelism** – 80% of people in church today are there because someone, a relative or friend, invited them. As we do our part in living and sharing our faith, we become a committed group of believer's gathering together providing opportunity for decisions to be made for Christ.

**Membership Helps Us to Fulfil Certain Legal Requirements:**

Although we are a spiritual body, we live in a secular world. There are rules and laws we must abide by relating to property ownership and incorporation requirements. Also there are civil laws regulating certain aspects of ministry like the military chaplaincy. Members fill vital and legally recognized roles that provide legitimacy within the civil government framework.

**Membership Gives You a Voice in Church Affairs:**

Just as a corporation allows only members (stockholders, not merely consumers) to vote on business matters, so Rochester First A/G, only committed members are involved with the selection of Pastor, Elders, Etc., as well as the purchase or sale of property.

**Membership Provides an Identity:**

When the Israelites left Egypt, they were a mixed multitude to be sure, but they were also all Israelites – to each other and to the Egyptians. They were a distinct people, a peculiar people, chosen out of love by God.

*You only are a people holy to God, your God; God chose you out of all the people on Earth as his cherished personal treasure.* [Deuteronomy 14:2 The Message](#)

God created us with a need to identify & commit ourselves to something bigger than our own existence.

**Qualifications for Membership – You Must Be:**

1. Born again
2. Baptized in water after conversion
3. Baptized in or seeking the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

4. Faithful in attendance, prayer, finances, etc.
5. Understand and approve the 16 fundamental doctrines of the church (Lesson #8)
6. Agree and support the mission, vision, and core values of the church (Lesson #8)
7. Regularly attend for at least 3 months

Why become a member of Rochester First A/G? We want to fulfill Jesus prayer of [John 17](#) to *“give the godless world evidence that you sent Jesus and loved them in the same way you love Him.”*

See you in Lesson #8!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]