
SCRIPTURAL REASONS WHY I SHOULD JOIN A LOCAL CHURCH

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Was there such a thing as actual church membership in the New Testament?

The Bible clearly infers that there was indeed membership in the early church:

- ❖ The early church kept rolls (1 Timothy 5:9, 11; Luke 10:20).
- ❖ Local churches sent letters of recommendation to each other (Romans 16:1; Colossians 4:10).
- ❖ Churches assumed responsibility for brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ❖ Believers in local churches submitted to one another.
- ❖ Believers valued & submitted to church leaders who watched over their souls (Hebrews 13:17).
- ❖ Local churches exercised discipline (1 Corinthians 5:2, 13; Matthew 18:15, 17). How could a brother or sister be removed from a church fellowship if there was no formal or at least understood membership?

Why should I join a local church?

- The early Christians did (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:13-14; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The New Testament does not name one Christian who was not a member of a local church. By implication there were some, but faithful believers were commanded to meaningfully identify

with the local church and to nurture it (Hebrews 10:25).

- The Bible teaches that as a believer I am to be under the spiritual authority of local church leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Matthew 18:15-17).
- I need a local assembly of believers to experience all the "One Another's" of the New Testament. The church is to be my extended family of care, support, and accountability.
- I am to be equipped to serve. As I do, Jesus' church is built up, strengthened in unity, and matured (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6).
- The church stimulates and encourages Christian living and service (Hebrews 10:24).
- The church offers a time and place for congregational celebration in worship, biblical proclamation, and the practice of Christ's ordinances (Acts 2:42).
- The New Testament emphasizes the local church; 23 of the 27 books of the New Testament were either written about the church, to individual churches, or to the leaders of local churches. The word *church* occurs 114 times. At least 92 of those occurrences refer to local churches. The word *church* refers to the universal body of Christ only 14 times. The local church is the

embodiment of the universal church; it is intended to be a visible body.

- Jesus Christ died to establish the church, including its local embodiment. As His children we, too, should love and serve His church (Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 16:18).

Unlike today, first-century believers did not have the opportunity to drift from one fellowship to another without commitment. What is clear is that they had an identifiable and responsible relationship with a local congregation.

Why should I become a member of Oakwood Community Church?

- ✓ Because I have trusted in Jesus Christ as my Forgiver and Leader and I know He wants me to identify with a local expression of His body.
- ✓ Because I know God designed me to operate as a functioning member of His body. I was made for *interdependence*, not *independence*.
- ✓ Because I am in substantial agreement with Oakwood's Statement of Faith.
- ✓ Because I am committed to Oakwood's mission of *transforming ordinary people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ*.

- ✓ Because I want to contribute to Oakwood's fulfillment of its mission and vision.
- ✓ Because through public commitment, I want to encourage Oakwood's members and leaders that I love the church and believe it is worthy of my commitment.

We cannot say that it is God's will for you to become a member of Oakwood Community Church, but we can say that it is God's will for you to become a dedicated member of one of His local churches.

What is the process for becoming a member of Oakwood?

- ❑ Attend the next *Discovering Oakwood* seminar.
- ❑ Complete and submit your membership application to the elders through the church office.
- ❑ Meet with one or more elders to review your application, share your testimony of faith in Jesus Christ, and answer any questions you might have.
- ❑ Be recommended to the congregation by the elders for membership and be accepted by the congregation by voice affirmation.
- ❑ Be presented to the Congregation at a Celebration service.

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