

Acts Studies: Why Membership Matters

“Cancel Anytime”

- ☐ Gallup, since 1937: do you belong to a church? 73% said yes in 1937, 70% in 1999, 47% by 2020. A minority for the first time since anyone started counting!
- ☐ A 2025 study of 24,000 churchgoers found 46% now attend or view services at multiple churches. For some, church has become one more subscription: cancel anytime.

Membership is Assumed and Expected Everywhere in the NT.

- ☐ No single verse says “become a member.” The New Testament simply assumes it on every page, and then gives us over 59 “one another” commands that cannot be obeyed outside of a known, committed, local people.
- ☐ The church is not amorphous. It has a definition: those truly saved by faith in Christ Jesus.

Four Marks of Belonging in Acts

1. Added

Acts 2:41, 47

41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls...

47 ...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- ☐ *prostithemi*: to be joined to a company, to be added to the number of one’s followers.
- ☐ New saints were added to something (the local church) with definition, something they once were outside of and now stand inside of.

2. Joined

Acts 5:13 - 14

13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

14 And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

- ☐ *kollao*: to glue, to cement, to fasten two things so tightly they become one. Same root as a man holding fast to his wife (Matthew 19:5).
- ☐ The demarcation line was compelling for some and confronting for others!

3. Counted

Acts 6:1

1 ...a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

- ☐ A daily distribution to widows required some list of who these widows were. Care requires knowing who needs cared for. “Let a widow be enrolled...” (1 Timothy 5:9).
- ☐ Enrolling with the local church exists for love’s sake, so no one gets missed.

4. Vouched For

Acts 9:26 - 27

26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord...

- ☐ Paul sought to be joined, he was examined, and he was affirmed by the brothers, by the church.
- ☐ Part of this membership is the church’s affirmation of a credible profession of faith. The brothers needed to vouch for the fact that Paul was, in fact, legit.

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Visibility: The Witness to a Watching World

Acts 11:26

26 ...For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

- ☐ The clearest look the world ever gets at Jesus is a committed local church loving each other through ordinary life.

Responsibility: The One Another Commands

1 Corinthians 12:26 - 27

26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

- ☐ *melos*: a limb, an organ, a body part. A member belongs, stays joined, and functions in place, or it withers.
- ☐ “One another” shows up about a hundred times in the New Testament, and roughly sixty of those are commands.
- ☐ Love, bear burdens, confess, forgive, admonish, encourage. It’s hard to obey as a spectator in a crowd of strangers!

Accountability: Growth, Correction, and Church Discipline

Matthew 18:15, 17

15 If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone...

17 ...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.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

- ☐ The goal every single time is growth and restoration. Forgive him, comfort him, reaffirm your love for him (2 Corinthians 2:7 - 8).
- ☐ If being “in” or “out” is meaningless, then church discipline and correction have no teeth.

Practical Life Together

1. **Show up predictably**, often enough that your absence gets noticed (Hebrews 10:24 - 25).
2. **Be known**. Be a part of the “life on life” aspect of the congregation, and be honest! Joining small groups are a great way for regular fellowship to happen.
3. **Give**. One of the great ways we worship God, help with practical needs, and combat the tendency toward self-centeredness.
4. **Serve where there is a need**. There are always plenty of ways to serve, across many different parts of the church.
5. **Take the problem to the person**, never around the room (Matthew 18).
6. **Stay through the hard seasons**. We sometimes call this the ministry of staying.

