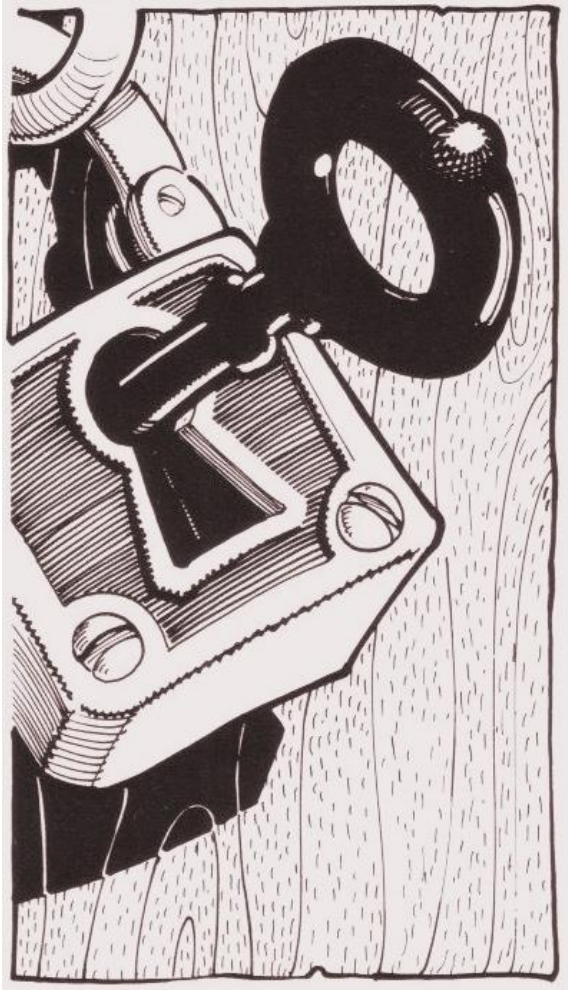


Unlocking the Truth about  
**Church Membership**

By Kenneth Chapman



A  
**Discipleship  
Course**

*Lesson Four*

*“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

John 8:31-32

“And ye shall know the truth...

# Introduction



**This is the fourth in a series of studies entitled Unlocking the Truth about...**

The Apostle Paul reminds us in the book of Ephesians that Christ not only “*loved the church, and gave himself for it;*” but also that He would be glorified in the church “*throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*” (Ephesians 5:23; 3:21).

In this booklet, we will be emphasizing the importance of Church Membership by showing that it is Biblical, it identifies us with God’s people, it is essential for our spiritual growth, it allows us to be involved in the Great Commission, provides a place to exercise our Spiritual gifts. I also want to challenge you about your commitment and the privileges and value of church membership.

**Instructions:** Read each section carefully. Fill in the blanks by looking up the Scriptures in your Bible (All Scripture quotations are from the King James Bible). This will help us to understand what God says about church membership. Also, before beginning this study, please take a moment and pray with the Psalmist: ‘*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*’ (Psalm 119:18).

If you have any questions, please ring me at 0405603201

God Bless!  
Kenneth Chapman

“And ye shall know the truth...

# Church Membership

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

God has established three major institutions on this earth: family, civil government and the local church. The word “church” is found 114 times in the New Testament.

## Church Membership is Biblical

While the words “church membership” are not found in the New Testament, the principle and procedure is clearly illustrated by the practice of New Testament churches:

### The Church at Jerusalem

- **Numbered Membership** – *“And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the \_\_\_\_\_ together were about an hundred and twenty,)”* (Acts 1:15). The first mention of the word “church” is found in Matthew 16:16-19, where Christ states that He will build His church. It is upon this foundation that there were 120 “names” on the church roll in Jerusalem.
- **Growing Membership** – As people were saved and baptized they were “\_\_\_\_\_ unto them” (Acts 2:41). Thus, the membership roll at the church of Jerusalem rose from 120 to over 3,000 souls.
- **Distinct membership** – When Peter and John were released from the council, *“...they went to their own \_\_\_\_\_”* (Acts 4:23). Note that the Bible says that this was their “own company,” there must have been something that made it different from all the other councils, clubs and secular congregations. Australian author, Robert J. Sargent, gave this simple definition for a New

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Testament Church: “an assembly of baptized believers, organized to carry out the Lord’s work.”

- **Unified Membership** – “*And the multitude of them that believed were of \_\_\_\_\_ heart and of \_\_\_\_\_ soul*” (Acts 4:32).
- **Voluntary Membership** “*And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things...And of the rest durst no man \_\_\_\_\_ himself to them: but the people magnified them*” (Acts 5:11-13). Note the two groups within the verses, first the “*them*” or the members of the church at Jerusalem and secondly the “*rest*” who would not join with them. The word “*join*” comes from the word glue, meaning to cement together. (As Baptists we reject all forms of coercion in spiritual matters, either in the matter of a state church, the sprinkling of infants or a chief commanding that all the people in the village convert to Christianity).
- **Spiritual Membership** – “*...look ye out \_\_\_\_\_ seven men...And the saying pleased the whole multitude*” (Acts 6:3-5).
- **Joinable Membership** – “*...he assayed to \_\_\_\_\_ himself to the disciples*” (Acts 9:26). While the church at Jerusalem initially rejected Saul’s bid for membership, they later accepted it upon Barnabas’s commendation. At the end of this study we will see how you may join our membership.

## The Church at Antioch

- **Assembled Membership** – “*...they assembled themselves \_\_\_\_\_ the church*” (Acts 11:26).

## The Church at Troas

- **Gathered Membership** – “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together...they were \_\_\_\_\_ together” (Acts 20:7-8).

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## The Church at Corinth

- **Discerning Membership** – “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are \_\_\_\_\_? do not ye judge them that are \_\_\_\_\_? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person*” (I Corinthians 5:11-13). Note the distinction between those “*without*” and “*within*” a church’s membership.
- **Gifted Membership** – In I Corinthians 12 and in Romans 12, the church is described as a body with each member having a specific function and purpose (Also see Colossians 1:18).

## The Church at Philippi

- **United Membership** – “...all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, \_\_\_\_\_ the bishops and deacons” (Philippians 1:1).

## The Church at Colosse

- **Sending Membership** – “*With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is \_\_\_\_\_...Epaphras, who is \_\_\_\_\_, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*” (Colossians 4:9-12). A great church is not always the one with the greatest seating capacity, but the one with the greatest sending capacity.

## Identify with God’s People

As mentioned earlier in Acts 4, when Peter and John were released from the council, they went unto their “*own company*” or fellowship of people who shared the same goals and values.

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Note the following passages

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE	BELIEVERS	UNBELIEVERS
Acts 5:11	Church	Many
I Corinthians 6:1-11	Brethren	Unjust
I Peter 4:17	House of God	Obey not the gospel

Someone once said that there are two groups of people in the world: **“those that are saints and those that ain’t.”** It is also interesting to note that the word *“saint”* is found 8 times in the Bible, while the word *“saints”* is found some 96 times. As Christians, God wants us connected to *“one another.”* Hebrews 10:24-25, *“And let us consider \_\_\_\_\_ to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting \_\_\_\_\_: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

Just as a uniform will identify what team you play for, so church membership helps identify us with God and His people. I once heard about a deaf man who attended church regularly even though he could not hear a word of the message. When asked why he replied, “I want the folks in the neighborhood to know which side I am on!”

A Christian once said to his minister, "I can worship God and enter into the Holy of Holies just as easily in my garden as I can in a church pew." Later, the two men were sitting before a fireplace in which the embers glowed cheerily. Silently the minister went to the fireplace, took the tongs, and lifted a single glowing coal from the fire and placed it alone on the hearth. Soon it became black ash. The church-neglecting Christian said, "Ah, you need not say a word. I understand what you mean. I cannot worship alone any more than I can live alone. I'll be in my place at the church next Sunday."

## Spiritual Growth

As noted in our last study, Unlocking the Truth about Baptism, believer’s baptism and church membership are vital to our Christian

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growth. The same truth is found in Acts 2:41-42 as illustrated in the chart below.

CHART OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH	
Received his word	Salvation
Baptized	Baptism
Added unto them	Church membership
Continued stedfastly	Christian growth

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15). Here the Apostle Paul reminds Timothy that the church is the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

God has not only given us His church to establish us in “the truth” but He has also given the church “...some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the \_\_\_\_\_, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Note the following admonitions to pastors to disciple and teach his people:

- Acts 20:28 – “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to \_\_\_\_\_, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
- I Corinthians 14:4 – “...but he that prophesieth (preaches)\_\_\_\_\_.”
- I Timothy 4:6 – “If thou \_\_\_\_\_ in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ...”

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- I Timothy 5:17 – “*Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.*”
- II Timothy 4:2 – “*\_\_\_\_\_...*”
- Titus 2:1 – “*But speak thou the things which become \_\_\_\_\_.*”
- Hebrews 13:7 – “*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have \_\_\_\_\_.*”
- I Peter 5:1-2 – “*The elders which are among you... \_\_\_\_\_ which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*”

God has given “*pastors and teachers...for the edifying of the body of Christ*” (church). Twenty-two of the twenty-seven New Testament Books were written to or about churches. **Church life is vital to our Christian growth!**

## Fulfill the Great Commission

It is impossible to be involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission without being a member of a New Testament Church. Note the following verses which define the Great Commission:

- Matthew 28:18-20 – “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and \_\_\_\_\_ all nations, \_\_\_\_\_ them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: \_\_\_\_\_ them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*”
- Mark 16:15 “*And he said unto them, \_\_\_\_\_, and preach the gospel to every creature.*”
- Luke 24:47-49 “*And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among \_\_\_\_\_.*”



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*beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you...”*

- John 20:21 *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even \_\_\_\_\_.”*
- Acts 1:8 *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me \_\_\_\_\_ in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

We find these principles and procedures of missions put into practice in the Book of Acts (In Acts 13, the church at Antioch commissions and sent Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey)

## Exercise your Spiritual Gifts

*“...Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a \_\_\_\_\_; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).*

**IS THE LIGHT OF  
YOUR LIFE,  
BRIGHT ENOUGH  
TO BRIGHTEN  
THE PATH OF  
ANOTHER?**

Both Mark and Luke repeated this truth, and reminds us that *“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a \_\_\_\_\_, that they which enter in may see the light (Luke 8:16; Mark 4:21).* Many people’s testimony does not shine because their lives are covered up by commerce or making a living (“vessel” or “bushel”), and other do not shine because of laziness (“under a bed”). The Bible states that we are to shine *“on a candlestick”* or through the church (Revelation 1:20).

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God has “gifted” every believer (I Peter 4:10; Romans 12; I Corinthians 12) for the “\_\_\_\_\_ of the church” (I Corinthians 14:12 also see Ephesians 4:11-16).

## Commitment

I want to encourage you to not be just a nominal church member or a “spiritual hitchhiker,” but to make a commitment to:

- **Service** – “For we are labourers \_\_\_\_\_ with God...” (I Corinthians 3:9-13; see II Corinthians 5:9-10).
- **Support** – “Now concerning the \_\_\_\_\_ for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye...” (I Corinthians 16:1-2; see Acts 11:29; II Corinthians 9:7).
- **Sanctification** – “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is \_\_\_\_\_, which temple ye are (I Corinthians 3:16-17).
- **Submission** – While the matter of church discipline will be dealt with in a future booklet, the principle of submission is established in Matthew 18:15-20; Hebrews 12-13; II Thessalonians 3:10-15.

## Privileges

Both baptism (after salvation and before membership) and the Lord’s Supper (after membership) are church ordinances (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10:47-48; I Corinthians 11:23-24).

As an Independent Baptist church we are directed by the Bible, self- governed by our members and led by our Pastor (Acts 1:15-26)

## Valuable

I believe the value or importance of church membership can be clearly seen by it’s:

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- **Purchased** – “...even as Christ also loved the church, and \_\_\_\_\_ for it” (Ephesians 5:25)
- **Presence** – Christ promised “...lo, \_\_\_\_\_ alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:20; see Revelation 1:13).
- **Power** – “But ye shall receive \_\_\_\_\_” (Acts 1:8).
- **Praise** – “..., in the midst of the church will I sing \_\_\_\_\_ unto thee (Hebrews 2:12 see Acts 2:47; 11:18).
- **Prayer** – “...call for the elders of the church; and let them \_\_\_\_\_ over him...” (James 5:14 see Acts 4:24-31; 12:5).
- **Provision** – “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the \_\_\_\_\_ (Galatians 6:10 see Romans 15:1; I Corinthians 12:25-26; Galatians 6:2).
- **Perpetuity** – “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus \_\_\_\_\_, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:21).

## Conclusion

If you believe that God is leading you to join with us at Territory Baptist Church please speak to the Pastor about church membership. He can answer any queries you may have and then present your name for membership.

The prerequisite for membership is a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and agreeing to uphold the doctrines and principles of Territory Baptist Church.

We receive members by:

- **Baptism** – Upon their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41; I Corinthians 12:13).
- **Letter** – A letter of transfer from a church of like faith and practice (Acts 9:26-28; 18:27; I Corinthians 16:3; II Corinthians 3:1).

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- Restoration – A former member who has been subject to disciplinary sanction and exclusion from membership may be restored to full and active membership upon the public confession and repentance (II Corinthians 5 cf II Corinthians 2:6-8).
- Statement of Faith – When a letter of transfer is not possible, a person may be received on their statement of faith that they have been saved and Scripturally baptized.