STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY NOTES

Study 5: Church membership

For personal study or groups

Your name

biblehelp.net

How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Belonging to each other

Joining the church

All true Christians love their brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 3:14). They should show this love by becoming members of their church. New members join by being received into membership on a special occasion, either straight after their baptism or at the next Lord's Supper. By becoming members of a church, Christians are simply recognising the commitment they owe each other.

God does not want Christians to wander from church to church, or to stay on the edge of church life. He wants them to take part fully and loyally in the life of their church. This is what we find Christians doing in the early church, and it is what church membership is all about.

1. Christians belong to each other

In the New Testament, believers in Jesus Christ are compared to a flock of sheep, a family or a body. This is the Holy Spirit's way of showing that Christians belong to each other and are part of something greater than themselves.

When you become a Christian, you are adopted into God's family. God does not want you to live in spiritual isolation. After baptism, God wants you to join a church, as the local expression of His family.

1 **Look up Acts 2:41**

What happened to those who were baptised that day?

See also: Acts 9:26.

The church is called the body of Christ.

2 **Look up 1 Corinthians 12:27**

What is the church called, and what is each believer?

Just as a body has many parts, so does the church. As the parts of a body belong together and work together, so Christians should be joined to one another and work together in God's work. And as different parts of a body do different jobs, so God gifts Christians to serve Him and His people in different ways.

Belonging to any family brings privileges and responsibilities. Let's look at the privileges and responsibilities of a church member.

2. Our privileges

The support of the church. God has given us to one another for mutual support. This can take many forms: other members will pray for you and help you in practical ways as needs arise.

3 **Look up Romans 15:26**

What did these churches do for the poor believers in Jerusalem?

4 **Look up Galatians 6:1–2**

What are Christians to do with one another's burdens?

Sharing in the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is the church's family meal, when we remember our Saviour's death and meet with Him in His risen life. This simple meal holds a special richness and blessing for church members. After the first Christians had joined the church, they "broke bread" together in memory of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. The Lord's Supper was called "the breaking of bread".

5 **Look up Acts 2:42**

To what did the first Christians devote themselves?

Sharing in decision-making. In the church, major decisions rest with the whole church family when they meet to discuss the church's work. But our task at these meetings is to seek God's will and do it, not simply to decide what we would like to do! Here is an example of decision-making in the early church.

6 **Look up Acts 6:3**

Who was asked to choose the seven men?

PART 2

Our part in the church

3. Our responsibilities

Every privilege brings responsibility, and this too takes many forms.

By being there when the church meets – especially Sunday worship, the Lord's Supper, mid-week prayer and Bible study, and church members' meetings.

7 **Read Hebrews 10:24–25**

What should we not neglect?

By praying for your pastor, elders and deacons, fellow members, those with special needs, and the sick. Praying together was typical of the early church.

8 **Look up Acts 1:14**

What did the believers do together?

By giving, which is the response of a heart that God has made rich.

9 **Look up 2 Corinthians 9:6–7**

What kind of giver does God love?

By serving. Encourage and urge on other members. Be a Barnabas!

10 **Look up Acts 11:23**

What did Barnabas do when he saw the grace of God?

By using your God-given gifts to help them.

11 **Look up 1 Peter 4:10**

What should each of us do with the gift he has received?

By living a life of love towards them, as Jesus commanded.

12 **Look up John 13:34**

How are we to love one another?

By taking part in the church's witness, especially by the way you live.

13 **Look up Matthew 5:16**

What should people see in us, and whom should they glorify?

Be a Barnabas

Barnabas' name means "son of encouragement". When he saw God's grace at work, he encouraged them all to abide in the Lord with all their hearts.

4. Conclusion

So being a church member is a great privilege, but it also calls for real sacrifice.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Why does God not want Christians to live their faith alone?

2. Which privilege of church membership do you value most?

3. Which responsibility do you find hardest, and how could you grow in it?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 5

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

STARTING OUT AS A CHRISTIAN · STUDY 5 · MEMORY VERSE

“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another.”

John 13:34

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Acts 2:41** *Those who embraced his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to the believers that day.*

2 **1 Corinthians 12:27** *Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it.*

3 **Romans 15:26** *For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.*

4 **Galatians 6:1–2** *[1]Brothers, if someone is caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him with a spirit of gentleness. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. [2]Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

5 **Acts 2:42** *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

6 **Acts 6:3** *Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men confirmed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will assign this responsibility to them*

7 **Hebrews 10:24–25** *[24]And let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. [25]Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have made a habit, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

8 **Acts 1:14** *With one accord they all continued in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

9 **2 Corinthians 9:6–7** *[6]Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [7]Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not out of regret or compulsion. For God loves a cheerful giver.*

10 **Acts 11:23** *When he arrived and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced and encouraged them all to abide in the Lord with all their hearts.*

11 **1 Peter 4:10** *As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, each of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve one another.*

12 **John 13:34** *A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another.*

13 **Matthew 5:16** *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 5: Church membership

> **Memory verse:** “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another.” (John 13:34). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- Show that Christians belong to each other, as the body of Christ, and should join a local church.
- Explain the privileges (support, the Lord's Supper, sharing in decisions) and responsibilities (being there, praying, giving, serving, using gifts, love, witness) of membership.

Suggested timing (about 60 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **25 min** Part 1 video (4 min); Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Romans 15:26, Galatians 6:1–2, Acts 2:42 and Acts 6:3.
- **25 min** Part 2 video (4 min); Hebrews 10:24–25, Acts 1:14, 2 Corinthians 9:6–7, Acts 11:23, 1 Peter 4:10, John 13:34, Matthew 5:16 and the discussion questions.
- **5 min** Summary and closing prayer.

Tips

- Explain how membership works in your church: when new members are received, and what members' meetings are.
- Encourage practical steps: regular attendance, a place in the prayer meeting, a way to serve.
- Giving should be cheerful and from the heart, not under pressure.

Answers to watch for

- **Acts 2:41:** those who embraced the message were baptised and added to the believers.
- **1 Corinthians 12:27:** you are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of it.
- **Romans 15:26:** churches made a contribution for the poor among the saints.
- **Galatians 6:1–2:** restore gently; carry one another's burdens.
- **Acts 2:42:** the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.
- **Acts 6:3:** the church chose seven men full of the Spirit and wisdom.
- **Hebrews 10:24–25:** not neglecting meeting together, but encouraging one another.
- **Acts 1:14:** with one accord they all continued in prayer.
- **2 Corinthians 9:6–7:** God loves a cheerful giver.
- **Acts 11:23:** Barnabas encouraged them all to abide in the Lord with all their hearts.
- **1 Peter 4:10:** use your gift to serve others.
- **John 13:34:** love one another as Jesus has loved us.
- **Matthew 5:16:** let your light shine before men.