

# Study Five



## Church Membership

*Read the lesson carefully, and fill in the Bible references before coming to the study.*

**A**ll true Christians love their brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 3:14). They should demonstrate this love by becoming members of their church. New members join the church by being received into membership on a special occasion, either immediately after 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 be on the edge of church life. He wants them to participate fully and loyally in the activities of their church. This is what we find Christians were doing in the early church, and what Church Membership is all about.

### 1. Christians Belong to Each Other

**I**n 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.

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Acts 2:41  
(cf. Acts 9:26)

The Church is called the Body of Christ.

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1 Corinthians 12:27

Just as a body consists of 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 should co-operate in God's work. And as different parts of a body perform different functions, so Christians are gifted by God to serve Him and His people in various ways.

Being a member of any family brings privileges and responsibilities. Let us consider the privileges and responsibilities of a Church Member:

### 2. Our Privileges as Christians

**T**he support of the Church. God has given us one another for mutual support. This may take a variety of forms, but other members will be encouraged to pray for you and to help you in practical

ways as the need may arise. The following verses illustrate this point.

Romans 15:26

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Galatians 6:1-2

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**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 symbolic meal holds a special richness and blessing for Church Members. After the early Christians had joined the Church they “broke bread” together in memory of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus. The Lord’s Supper was described as “the breaking of bread”.

Acts 2:42

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**Sharing in Decision Making.**

In the Christian Church, major decisions rest with the whole Church family when they meet to discuss the work of the Church. However, it is important to realise that our task at such meetings is to seek God’s will and do it. We are not there simply to decide what *we* would like to do! The next text is an example of decision making in the Early Church.

Acts 6:3

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**3. Our Responsibilities as Christians**

**S**upporting the fellowship of the church. All privilege involves responsibility, and this also takes a variety of forms.

**By your attendance** when the Church meets – especially Sunday Worship, the Lord’s Supper, mid-week Prayer and Bible Study, and Church Business Meetings.

Hebrews 10:25

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**By your prayers** for your pastor, elders and deacons, fellow-members, those with special needs, and the sick. Praying together was typical of the Early Church.

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Acts 1:14

**By your giving,** which is the response of a spiritually enriched heart:

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2 Corinthians 9:6-7

**By your serving.** Encourage and exhort other members. Be a Barnabas.

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Acts 11:23

**By using your God-given gifts** to help them.

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1 Peter 4:10

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

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John 13:34

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

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Matthew 5:16

#### **4. Conclusion**

**S**o you see, being a Church Member is a great privilege, but it also demands real sacrifice.