



Introduction to Emmanuel

Lesson 1

Becoming a Part of Our Church

We are thrilled anytime the Lord sees fit to bless us with new members. You may have decided you want to join Emmanuel or you may be just checking us out. Either way, we're glad you are here and are willing to take this membership class.

Our church is committed to the **sufficiency of Scripture**. That means that in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments God has “has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3). We believe that the Bible, the Word of God, is sufficient or enough in its teachings so that we are “equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). We do not believe that human beings on their own and according to their own wisdom can address the pressing problems that they face in this life. We need God. We need help from the only One Who is in a position to rescue us. And He has given us all the help we need in His Word. That is why we will refer constantly to the Bible in this study and the other three studies in this class. It is the source and substance of all we believe and teach. (For further study on sufficiency, please read Psalms 19 and 119).

In our study today, we will concentrate on The Importance of Church Membership, The Blessing of Church Membership, and The Requirements of Church Membership.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

There are many organizations seeking our time and commitment. Why should anyone consider the church, and membership in a church, to be important?

A. It is important because it was important to Jesus Christ.

Please read Matthew 16:13-23.

1. What question did Jesus pose to His disciples (v.13)?

2. How did Peter answer (v. 16), and what did Jesus think about His answer (v. 17)?

3. Jesus makes reference to Peter as leader and representative of all the apostles (see Ephesians 2:19-20) when he says the words “upon this rock” (v. 18). What did Jesus say He would build upon this rock? _____

4. What does this tell us about the importance of the church to our Lord, and how should this affect the way we view the church? _____

5. What was Jesus' view of anyone who wanted the church to be built without Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (vv. 21-23)? _____
- _____

Please read Acts 1:6-8, 2:1-4, 41.

6. What did Jesus Christ tell His disciples before He ascended into heaven (1:8)? _____
- _____
7. On what day was this promise fulfilled (2:1-4)? _____
8. What was the process by which men and women were added to the church (2:41)? _____
- _____
9. From these verses, would you conclude that the church had an important place in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ? _____ Why or why not? _____
- _____

How would you respond to a person who said, "I love Jesus Christ, but I have no place in my life for the church?" _____

B. It is important because of the place the church is given in the New Testament.

As one reads the New Testament, he is struck by the prominent place the church is given. Our Lord is clearly carrying out His plan and program today through the ministry of local churches.

In his book, The Doctrine and Administration of the Church, Dr. Paul R. Jackson has written:

God never changes (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), although His dealings with men have changed during the ages. From Abraham to Christ, His relationship with men centered in the nation of Israel. Since Christ, His ministry has been through the Church. Israel, as a nation, has been set aside until the Church is raptured (Romans 11:25). For fifteen hundred years before Christ, the law given through Moses was in force. Since Christ, the Scriptures declare that we are not under law but under grace (Romans 6:14; see also John 1:17).

This does not mean there are two ways of salvation. God has never saved men by works in any age. Faith in Him has been the universal qualification. Shed blood has been the unvarying requirement. Before Christ, animal sacrifices were offered at the command of God. Sin was thereby acknowledged and covered (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 10:1-4). Then Christ came and died for our sins. He died for the sins that were past (Romans 3:25) and redeemed those who were under the law (Galatians 4:4, 5).

So while God does not change and salvation has always been by faith in Him, God did an entirely new thing when He established the Church. The distinctions between law and grace, Israel and the Church, must be clearly discerned if the Word of God is to be understood.

*The Scripture also distinguishes between the Church which is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23) and local churches. The local church is the current practical manifestation of the Body of Christ. The local church is the major emphasis of the New Testament. The Greek word *ekklesia*, translated church, is applied to the local churches some ninety times, and to the Church which is His Body about twenty times.*

Sometimes referred to as the universal or the invisible Church, the Church which is His body is a blessed fact, emphasizing the unity of God's people in this age. It includes all the redeemed, whether Jews or Gentiles, from Pentecost to the Rapture, whether in Heaven or on earth. It never meets during this age. It makes no decisions, exercises no discipline, administers no ordinances and preaches no gospel. It is awaiting completion when it will finally be gathered in Glory as "the general assembly and church of the firstborn . . ." (Hebrews 12:23).

The local New Testament church is often dishonored by referring to the Church which is His Body as "the true church," thus inferring that a local church is not a true church. It is a true church if established according to the Word of God. The terminology which refers to the Body as an organism and the local church as an organization needs to be used carefully lest the false inference be given that the organization is man-made and unimportant.

If these distinctions are clearly seen so that the local church is not robbed of its significant position, the truth concerning the Church which is His Body encourages and comforts.

1. Many of the New Testament epistles are addressed to local churches.

Please read Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2.

For additional study: Read 1 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

What are some of the ways Paul describes the men and women to whom he is writing these New Testament letters? _____

2. Some of the other New Testament epistles are written to leaders of local churches.

Both Timothy and Titus served as pastors in a local church. Paul was writing to them to let them know how God wanted the church to function (1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4).

3. Even the book of Revelation is addressed to local churches.

Please read Revelation 1:4, 11.

To what seven churches is the Book of Revelation written? _____

4. What are the implications of these truths to men and women today?

C. It is important because of the way the church is described in God's Word.

1. A _____ of which Christ is Head. (Colossians 1:18a)
2. A _____ of which Christ is the Cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20, 21)
3. A _____ of whom Christ is the Bridegroom. (Ephesians 5:23-32)
4. A _____ of whom Christ is the Owner. (Titus 2:14)
5. A _____ of which Christ is the Shepherd. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

- 6. A _____ of which Christ is the Creator. (Ephesians 2:15)
- 7. A _____ of which Christ is the High Priest. (1 Peter 2:9)
- 8. An _____ of which Christ is the Heir. (Ephesians 1:18)

D. It is important because of the way New Testament churches kept organized membership rolls.

- 1. The numbers were known (Acts 1:15, 2:41, 4:4).
- 2. Special rolls were kept (1 Timothy 5:9).
- 3. Election of officers assumes a roll (Acts 6:2-5).
- 4. Church discipline assumes a roll (1 Corinthians 5:13).

Dr. J. Alva McClain, long-time professor at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, wrote: *“The necessity of membership in the local church is never questioned in the New Testament. It is taken for granted. Had we asked the believers of the Apostolic period whether it was essential to join a church, they would not have known what we were talking about. Every believer became a member of a church. It was involved in the very profession he made in Christ.”*

What question(s) should each person who studies this Biblical material be asking himself?

II. THE BENEFITS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

[Note: This subject will be developed more fully in Lesson 2 of this series.]

Please read John 13:34, 35.

- 1. The church is a place where you can _____ others and be _____ by others.
Many times the world in which we live is a harsh, cruel place. But in Christ’s church, the key principle must be love for one another.
- 2. List several practical ways you could show love to another person in our church.

Please read Colossians 1:28 and 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

- 3. The church is a place where you can _____ the Word of God.
- 4. Describe the habits of a person who truly wants to learn the Word of God.

Please read Ephesians 5:19-21. (For additional study: Read Psalm 40:3.)

- 5. The church is a place where you can worship God with other believers and _____ spiritual songs together.

Please read 1 Corinthians 12:4-8.

- 6. The church is a place where you can use your spiritual _____ to serve God and others.

7. List several ways a person could use his/her spiritual gifts in the local church today.
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III. THE REQUIREMENTS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

In the introduction to our study, we said that God has blessed us by giving us a Bible that is totally sufficient. When it comes to the matter of requirements for church membership, God's Word clearly outlines two.

Please re-read Acts 2:41.

A. Salvation

In Mark 1:15 Jesus Christ summed up what is necessary to biblical salvation: "Repent and believe in the gospel." In this verse Jesus indicates that there are two sides to the coin of salvation: repentance and faith. These two concepts are inseparable in the Scripture. You can't have one without the other. However, there are times in Scripture when only one of these elements is mentioned as necessary for salvation. Michael Barrett writes, "The book of Acts illustrates this. Some passages mention only the necessity of repentance: Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 17:30. Others require only faith: Acts 8:12-13; 10:43; 11:17; 13:39; 16:30-31. But here is the key point. Even when the Scripture mentions only one or the other, the unnamed element is always assumed."

— Complete in Him, Ambassador-Emerald International, Greenville, SC, 2000, p. 55

1. Faith

- a. How does Ephesians 2:8-9 state that an individual *is* and *is not* saved? _____
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The term "**grace**" implies that God is **giving** something to us that we **do not deserve** (Heaven, righteousness, eternal life, etc.). In Titus 3:5, the term "**mercy**" is used which means God **withholding** something from us which we **do deserve** (Hell, condemnation, eternal punishment). Because we are all born sinners (Romans 3:23), we deserve death (Romans 6:23). But God in His "graciousness" provided a way of salvation.

- b. As we have seen in Ephesians 2:8-9, salvation is "by grace through faith." Now, all people have a certain amount of "faith" in something/somebody/some being. However, the value of that faith is determined by its object, that is, in what or whom is the faith *placed*?

According to Acts 16:31, what is the object of the faith that saves?

- c. Can faith in anything else save an individual (Acts 4:12)? _____

- d. "Faith" is not merely intellectual assent (James 2:19). However, it does involve knowing and believing that the facts about the **person** and **work** of Christ are **TRUE**. What "facts" are mentioned in the following verses?

• 1 John 5:1: _____

• 1 John 4:2: _____

- Romans 10:9: _____
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: _____

e. Faith is not simply believing that these “facts” are true. Even *demons* know the facts about Jesus (James 2:19). Biblical faith involves the additional aspect of personal trust or dependence upon these truths for your salvation from sin.

How does John 1:12 state this? "But as many as _____ Him . . ."

This word has the meaning “take hold of” or “grasp.” Thus, one must “grasp” or “take _____ hold” of Him (Christ) as one's own ***personal Lord and Savior***.

What phrases in the apostle Paul's testimony in 2 Timothy 1:12 indicate that he did this?

f. Summary: Thus Biblical faith that results in salvation must include the following elements:

Knowledge of the facts about Christ and His redemptive work,
Belief that these facts are true, and
Trust in these truths for your personal salvation.

2. Repentance

a. “Whereas faith focuses on the grace that leads us to Christ, repentance focuses on the grace of God that leads us away from sin by turning us around to see and to follow after Christ. Habitually pursuing sin and savingly pursuing Christ are mutually exclusive. In the physical realm, it is impossible to go in two directions simultaneously or to look in two places at once. That’s not hard to understand. Neither should it be hard to recognize the same principle of one-direction restrictions in the spiritual realm. Repentance starts us and keeps us on our spiritual journey” (Complete in Him, p. 68).

b. There are at least three expressions of biblical repentance.

1) “Repentance is a matter of the mind. The repentant sinner understands the heinous nature of sin as an offense against God as the only source of mercy” (Complete in Him, p. 72). In fact, the word “repent” literally means a “change of mind” with reference to sin and God which produces a change in action. What phrase in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 describes true repentance on the part of the Thessalonian believers? _____

2) “Repentance is a matter of the emotion. The repentant sinner grieves and sorrows over his sin. In repentance the sinner offers no excuses for sin. Rather, with contrition, godly sorrow, and hatred of sin, he confesses that he has violated the law of the Lord. Until sin is felt and freely confessed, genuine conversion cannot ensue” (Complete in Him, p. 72). Repentance is NOT merely feeling “sorry” or “remorseful” over your sin. For example, Judas felt remorse over the betrayal of Christ (Matthew 27:3), but he did not truly repent.

3) “Repentance is a matter of the will. The repentant sinner obediently resolves to forsake his old ways and to seek the Lord” (Complete in Him, p. 73). Read Isaiah

55:6-7. What phrases does this verse use to show a person's turning from his sin and to God? _____

B. Baptism by immersion after salvation.

Please read Matthew 28:19, 20.

1. What are Christ's four commands in Matthew 28:19, 20?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

2. Baptism is not necessary for salvation. Salvation cannot be of human merit, for it is a work of God, not of man. Please read the following verses, and note how we are saved.

- a. Ephesians 2:8, 9: _____
- b. Titus 3:5: _____

Please read Romans 6:3-6.

3. Baptism is not a ritual; it is an identification with Jesus Christ. Baptism is an outward expression of your inward faith in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; it is a reminder that you are dead to sin and arisen to walk in newness of life.

4. Which mode of baptism fits the thought of the following passages: sprinkling, pouring, or immersion?

- a. John 3:23: _____
- b. Acts 8:36-39: _____
- c. Romans 6:4, 5: _____
- e. Colossians 2:12: _____