

# Attender or Member?

Eph 3:21

## Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul wrote about the end times when “iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold” (Matt 24:12) when people will have “a form of godliness... denying the power thereof” (2Tim 3:5).
2. The attitudes of many in society have invaded the hearts of large numbers of God’s people, especially when it comes to church membership
3. Many believers today see no to join a church and they are content simply to attend
  - a. This gives them the ability to “hop and shop” from place to place
  - b. Being an attender but not a member relieves of any real commitment
4. Some are discouraged by the ecumenical “hodge-podge” of so-called churches in their communities.
5. It is not what we feel, what we think, or what others say and do – “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” – Rom 10:17
6. “Give me a menu” ←
7. I want to give you four scriptural reasons why every saved person ought to join a NT Baptist Church

## **I. Church Membership is a Precept**

- There is no specific Bible verse that says, “Thou shalt join this church”
- But as you study the NT it is clear that church membership is God’s command for every believer

### **A. Inherent in the Ordinance of Baptism**

1. The Lord Adds Believers to His Churches – Acts 2:47  
*47 .... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*
2. Believers are Added to a Church by Baptism – Acts 2:41  
*41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*
3. Baptizing Believers is Commanded by the Lord Jesus – Matt 28:19  
*19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*
  - a) *Because the Lord commanded His churches to baptize those who believe on Him, it follows that believers are commanded to be baptized*
  - b) *Since baptism adds a believer to the church, the conclusion is that believers are commanded to join a church*

## **B. Implied in the Examples of Church Life**

1. The church at Jerusalem had a numbered membership – Acts 1:15  
15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.)
2. The church at Antioch had a visible membership – Acts 11:26  
26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
3. The church at Troas had a gathering membership – Acts 20:7-8  
7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

## **II. Church Membership is Profitable**

### **A. The Church Is Here for Your Instruction**

1. The Lord Commanded It – Matt 28:20  
20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...
2. Pastors are Appointed to It – Eph 4:11-13  
11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

### **B. The Church is Here for Your Protection**

1. Provided By the Pastors – Heb 13:17  
17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.
2. Protection from False Teachers – Acts 20:28-29
3. Protection from the Attacks of Satan – 2Tim 2:24-26

### **C. The Church is Here for Your Correction**

1. From the Pulpit – 1 Thess 5:12 and 2 Tim 4:2 ←
2. From the Pew – Matt 18:17 and 1Cor 6:4

### **III. Church Membership Involves Promises**

- Being part of the Lord's church involves a commitment on your part
- Commit your time, treasures, talents and your temple
- Church leaders hear this all the time: "It's just so hard to get the kids up and dressed in time for Sunday school." The next time that sad excuse floats your way, take a minute to tell those struggling parents about Kenny and Bobbi McCaughey. Most people will remember they are the couple who made medical history on November 19, 1997, by giving birth to the world's first surviving septuplets. Imagine what it must be like to get seven babies ready for church. Most of us would probably just settle for a good TV preacher until the kids were old enough to dress themselves. Yet because of the commitment the McCaugheys made on their wedding day, church is an integral part of their lives. Seven newborns did not change that conviction. Every Sunday morning and evening they load up the family and head to the Missionary Baptist Church in their town of Carlisle, Iowa. And to top it off, it's a well-known fact in their church that the McCaugheys are often the first family to arrive for Sunday School at 9:30 A.M. But enough about them, tell me again about the problems your having getting your three kids ready for Sunday school.

#### **A. A Promise of Faithful Service – 1Cor 3:9**

**9 For we are labourers together with God...**

1. Church membership involves labor
2. Getting up and getting ready
3. Teaching a SS class – singing in the choir -- visiting

#### **B. A Promise of Liberal Support**

1. **Ac 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:**
2. **2Co 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.**
3. One father was complaining to another that his son cast him too much money - for books, for clothes, for lunch and tuition. "It's strange that you feel like that," the other man replied. "My son doesn't cost me a cent. I haven't spent a cent on him for over two years, but I sure wish I could." "Why doesn't he cost you anything?" asked the first father. "A little over two years ago he died," the second father replied. A church that is alive needs money. Only dead churches don't call on their members for support. If someone accuses your church of always needing money, regard it as a compliment. You belong to a going, growing concern for Jesus Christ rather than a dead, stagnant organization.

#### **IV. Church Membership Has a Purpose**

- A Baptist Church is not intended to be a social club
- The Lord's churches exist for specific God-given purposes
- The purpose is given in the "Great Commission" of our Lord
- Everything we do ought to be centered around these "marching orders"

##### **A. The Purpose of Evangelism**

*Ac 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

1. Winning the lost in our own community
  - a) *Ac 5:28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.*
  - b) *Members of the Lord's churches are expected to personally seek the salvation of their kindred, friends, neighbors, acquaintances*
2. Winning the Lost in our Region – our Nation – all the world
3. The need is great – the cause is right – the duty is clear

##### **B. The Purpose of Defending the Truth**

1. There is only one faith and this one faith important
  - a) *Col 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*
  - b) *1Co 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*
2. This One Faith is Under Attack
  - a) *1Ti 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*
  - b) *2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*
3. This One Faith is to Be Defended – Jude 3  
3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
4. The Lord's Churches are the Defenders of the One Faith  
1Ti 3:15 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 pillar and ground of the truth.

A pastor was once asked to define "Faithful Attendance at Worship," and this was his reply:

All that I ask is that we apply the same standards of faithfulness to our church activities that we would in other areas of our life. That doesn't seem too much to ask. The church, after all, is concerned about faithfulness.

Consider these examples: If your car started one out of three times, would you consider it faithful? If the paperboy skipped Monday and Thursdays, would they be missed? If you didn't show up at work two or three times a month, would your boss call you faithful? If your refrigerator quit a day now and then, would you excuse it and say, "Oh, well, it works most of the time." If your water heater greets you with cold water one or two mornings a week while you were in the shower, would it be faithful? If you miss a couple of mortgage payments in a year's time, would your mortgage holder say, "Oh, well, ten out of twelve isn't bad"? If you attend worship and attend meetings only often enough to show you're interested but not often enough to get involved, are you faithful?

#### Conclusion:

1. Many Christians seem to have the attitude – "Oh, well, I don't think it makes any difference, just so long as you are saved. After all, one church is as good as other."
  - a. This sounds nice, but it is not true
  - b. There are multitudes of "churches" and denominations to be found teaching almost every conceivable kind of doctrine.
  - d. In many instances their teachings are in direct conflict and both cannot be correct. Both may be wrong.
2. A "church" established by man is not the same as a church established by Christ and His apostles
  - a. The Bible says that Jesus established His church while He was here on the earth – Matt 16:18
  - b. He promised that His churches would continue to exist through all ages until His return – Matt 28:20b
  - c. Baptists do not trace their history to any human founder – they go back to Jesus Christ – the "author and finisher of our faith." – Heb 12:2
3. A church that teaches error is not the same as a church that teaches truth
  - a. NT Baptists have always been people of "the Book"
  - b. We have sought to preach it, teach it and practice it
4. A church that teaches only part of the truth is not the same as a church that teaches the whole truth
  - a. We do not have the luxury to "pick and choose" which doctrines we want to believe and what practices we want to follow
  - b. We must accept the whole counsel of God

After a lot of prodding, a wife finally talked her husband into visiting a church. She reminded him that, although the two of them had been raised in church, they weren't providing their children with a religious upbringing. He wasn't convinced of her argument until they entered the church lobby and were greeted by an usher. The church host handed the adults a bulletin but didn't give one to the kids. The oldest daughter convinced her dad they needed more church when she turned to the usher and said, "Hey, we want a menu too!"

11 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.

12 For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13 But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

1Th 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

2Ti 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Mt 18:17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

1Co 6:4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.