



UNITED KINGDOM

New Member's Study Guide

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the day approaching

Hebrews 10:25

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts. Praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

Acts 2:42, 46, 47.

Welcome to our Membership classes! We are so glad that you have considered becoming a part of our fellowship and hope that our time together will be fruitful.



Why are we having these classes?

- So that we are all moving in the same direction
- everyone in the church should know the vision and values of our fellowship and be on board with them.
- So that new people will understand what they are coming into and commit to our church.
- So that regular members will be reminded of what we are trying to achieve and committed to our goals.
- So that everyone, whether members of our church or not, will understand the important principles of being committed to a local body of believers.

What topics will we be covering?

- 1) Why should anyone become a member of a church?
- 2) What do we get as a result of membership?
- 3) What are the responsibilities of membership?
- 4) What about our church?
 - a) Vision
 - b) Values

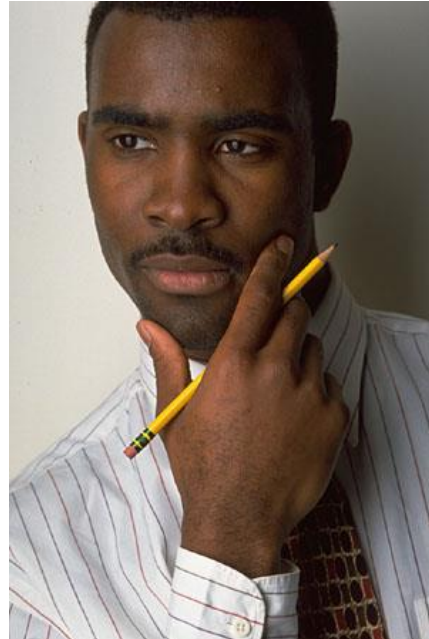
I hope that these study notes will help you to feel comfortable as a member, that you will begin to discover the gifts that God has given you and eventually begin to serve Him the way He wants you to serve.

God bless you!

Freddie

Freddie C Roberson Jr.
Pastor

Why should I become a member of a church anyway? This is something that some Christians say who are reluctant to "join" a church. In this first section, we will consider the answer to this question.



What Is Membership?

The moment that we received Christ as our Saviour we actually became *members of God's family*. God is our Father and we are his sons and daughters. Every believer is a part of the "body" of Christ. This means that no matter where you are or where you are from, you are a member of Christ's church. God's word explains it this way:

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6

When you become a member of Christ's family there are 4 things that are very important:

- Repentance from sin
- Faith in Jesus
- Baptism
- Receiveing the Holy Spirit

These are more thoroughly dealt with in an outline called "New Believers."

Throughout the scriptures we can also see that believers were identified on a more local level. For example, many of the New Testament books were written to all the believers in a particular place. The book of Romans was written to the believers in Rome, first and second Corinthians were letters to the church in Corinth, Galatians to the brethren in Galatia and so on. This did not only apply to cities, but also to gatherings of believers in individual homes. In the last chapter of Romans when the apostle Paul writes final greetings, he greets a couple named Priscilla and Aquila and adds this statement: *"Greet also the church that meets at their house."* This implies that there was an established group of believers who identified themselves as being a church in a home. As well as being a part of the overall body of Christ, they were members of a smaller group. In his letter to the Colossians, when again he sends his final

greetings, he writes a very similar thing: *"Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house."*

Today things are no different. We are members of the body of Christ worldwide and at the same time identify with all believers within our city or town. It is very important to identify with a local body of believers for covering, support, fellowship and our overall growth.

Three reasons why every believer in Jesus should also become part of a local group of believers:

1) Because God expects us to be committed to Him and to His people! We need to be counted. God has always been interested in numbers and commitment:

a) Old Testament

- i) The whole of Israel were numbered - Numbers 1,2 (in fact, the whole book is called "Numbers")
- ii) The Levites were also numbered before they were able to minister - Numbers 3
- iii) The people were numbered when they returned from Babylon - Ezra 2, Nehemiah 7

b) New Testament

- i) Jesus chose 12 - Luke 6:12-17; 9:1,2
- ii) Jesus chose 70 - Luke 10:12
- iii) Jesus called His sheep by name - John 10: 3,14
- iv) 500 saw His ascension - 1 Corinthians 15:1-3
- v) In the book of Acts:
 - (1) 120 are recorded to be in the upper room - Acts 1:15
 - (2) 3000 were added after the day of Pentecost - Acts 2:41
 - (3) 5000 were added later - Acts 4:4
 - (4) The disciples multiplied greatly - Acts 6:7
 - (5) Many thousands (myriads) were in Jerusalem alone - Acts 21:20
- vi) Believer's names are registered in heaven - Hebrews 12:22-24
- vii) All believers have their names written in the Book of Life - Philippians 4:3; Revelation 13:8, 17:8, 20:12-15; 21:27
- viii) The books (God keeps records):
 - (1) Psalm 139:16 - "in your book they all were written"
 - (2) Malachi 3:16 - "...a book of remembrance was written..."
 - (3) Revelation 20:12 - "...books were opened."

2) Because God expects us to be in relationship with His people! Relationships are created and maintained in local churches

a) Examples of local assemblies mentioned in the New Testament:

- i) The church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila - Romans 16:3-5

- ii) "The churches of Asia greet you..." 1 Corinthians 16:19
- iii) There is a church in the house of "Nymphas" - Colossians 4:15
- b) Examples of the type of relationships within these "local churches" in Romans 16:
 - i) "Greet Priscilla and Aquila..." v. 3
 - ii) "...the beloved Persis..." v. 12
 - iii) "...Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine..." v. 13
- 3) **Because more can be accomplished collectively than individually!** We cannot do it alone.
 - a) Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (Two are better than one...)

Questions about Membership

Here are a few common questions about church membership:

Does this mean that I am signing up to one church forever? No. Circumstances and situations change from year to year. A change of job may cause you to move out of the area or there could be a call to help to plant another fellowship. At some point you may feel that it is just time to move on. The decision is always yours. The most important thing is to know where God has placed you and to stay there until He indicates that it is time to move.

Does this mean that I can't visit other churches? No. Visiting other churches can be very healthy and encouraging. However, it is important to make your home church your first priority. My children may be invited to eat at a friend's house on many occasions, but they receive most of their meals from home!

Does this mean that I have to do whatever the leaders of our church tell me to do in all areas of life? All of us must submit to the Lord Jesus Christ as our leader and master and be led by the Holy Spirit. Church leaders are there for support, counsel and direction, but in the end your life decisions are yours. We will look at church leadership and submission in greater detail in another section.

Questions for discussion:

Why should anyone become a member of a local church?

Why do some dislike Church Membership?

Why do people go to church? I'm sure that there are some who go out of duty and others may even go because of some vow or commitment made either to God or to a loved one years ago. But generally speaking I believe that most people who go to church regularly do so because they want to! There is something special about worshipping together with others who have the same heart and mind. However, when we consider being a committed member of a church we are not just talking about going to a meeting or to, but becoming part of a family and developing in relationship with God and with others who follow him. Becoming a member of a church means developing close bonds with other believers. We share our joys, hurts, fears, and victories. We have fun together, face issues together, and even get mad at each other. We get close!



Benefits Of Membership

I often hear visitors say that they felt such peace when they entered the church building. Others speak of the smiling faces and warm greetings received during a church service. It certainly seems to me that Christians seem to benefit from their relationship with God and with other believers. But how?

Acts 2:42 speaks of four things that the early believers benefited from:

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers..."

They are:

- 1) *Teaching* - it is in a local church that we learn the teachings of scripture and eventually learn to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2)
- 2) *Fellowship* - this is where we gain our sense of belonging and identity. By being with other believers we grow together and discover our gifts, abilities and calling to ministry. Christians who neglect fellowship will always find it difficult to grow.
 - a) Fellowship means *relationship* (Acts 4:32-35)
 - b) Fellowship means *support* (1 Corinthians 12:25,26)
 - c) Fellowship means *meeting regularly together* (Hebrews 10:23-25)

- 3) *Breaking of bread* -Jesus told us to remember what He did for us by breaking bread *together* as they did at the last supper. In this we remember what has passed and receive strength for the future. (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- 4) *Prayers* - as we pray together with specific requests we receive strength and answers from God, who actually speaks to us! We are also able to stand in the gap on behalf of our families, friends, communities and the nations. (James 5:16)

Here are a few other things to consider:

- 5) *Involvement* - when you are committed to the church you are able to practice and develop your spiritual and natural gifts through various areas of service. You have a say in the way things are done and have access to the various ministries and resources of the church.
- 6) *Discipline and Correction* - those who really love us and know us are the ones who will speak the truth to us in love. (Ephesians 4:14,15; Galatians 6:1)
- 7) *Leadership and Direction* - The church leaders are there to help us find God's will for our lives and are examples for us to follow. Here are a few things that the bible says about our church leaders:
 - a) They are examples to us - 1 Timothy 4:12; Hebrews 13:7
 - b) They watch for our souls - Hebrews 13:17
 - c) They shepherd us - 1 Peter 5: 1-7
 - d) They prepare us for service - Ephesians 4:11-13
 - e) They do not lord over us or intimidate us (1 Peter 5:3; 2 Timothy 2:23-26)

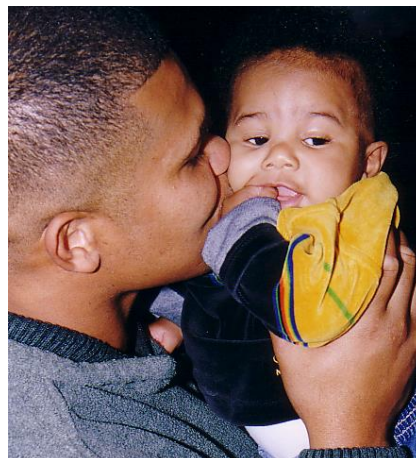
Questions for discussion:

What are some of the things that you like most about coming to Church?

In what ways have you benefited by being part of the Church so far?

Responsibilities of Membership

In every family there are privileges as well as responsibilities. For example, as a child at home we may receive the benefit of free meals, but still have to face the responsibilities of washing up. The same is true in the family of God. As part of "His body" the Lord does not expect us to simply sit and do nothing. Instead He has a place and function for every member. Also, in the same way that children grow and develop by working around the house, we as children of God grow and develop by working to further God's kingdom. Here are some of the things that are important.



Participation in Church Functions

The best way that any Christian can grow and find their purpose in life is by meeting together with other believers. I've heard it said that going to church does not make you a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger. However, you would expect to find hamburgers at McDonalds and in the same way you would expect to find Christians at a church service. It is quite obvious that **regular attendance** is vital for personal growth. However, there is more to church life than attending on Sunday mornings. The real life of the church is seen when we meet besides Sunday morning. It says it this way in the book of Hebrews:

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Hebrews 10:22-25

Here are some of the regular meetings that we see as vital to the life of our church and that we would expect you as a member to become involved in:

- **Sunday Morning Worship** - when we come together weekly to encourage one another through worship, teaching, and testimony.
- **Mid-week Home Groups** - where we really get to know one another, receive pastoral care and learn to serve.
- **Special Events** - which include: events like the church Anniversary (usually around May), our International Day (usually in July) and special events during holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

We would like to encourage you to become involved in a one of our *home groups* that meet in individual homes each week. If there is not one near you one could be started near you, or possibly in your home if suitable. One more thing, it is really important for us to develop real relationships with one another. You may not know everyone in the

church, but you should know someone! The early Christians benefited from just being together, and we want to do the same.

Service

God has called us all to a life of service. He wants us to use our abilities, both natural and spiritual, to enable the body to grow. As the parts of our bodies have different functions that are all necessary for our bodies to work properly, so we as members of Christ's body have different gifts to use.

Every one of us has something to offer in service to God. He doesn't want us to be concerned with the gifts that you do not have, but to use the ones that you do have. Some things we do are more related to spiritual growth like preaching, playing an instrument for worship, teach a Sunday school class or praying for the sick. Others are more to do with material things like driving the church van, cleaning the building, organising a dinner or gardening. All are necessary and are ways of serving the Lord. See 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6 and John 13:14-15.

How can I discover my gifts and ministry?

- Have a go at whatever is needed
- Begin to assess your gifts and abilities
- Reflect on your heart and personality
- Consider your experiences and what you have learned from them

For further study, ask for the notes titled "Using What God Gave You".

Giving

There is no "fee" for joining a church, but giving is an important part of our worship toward God. The bible has much to say about giving. In fact, there is more in the bible about giving than there is about hell or heaven. There is not time to deal with the whole subject of our stewardship toward God, but here are a few important things to briefly consider:

What should our attitude be?

- Everything belongs to God - 1 Chronicles 29:14-16
- Our giving is an act of worship - 2 Corinthians 9:12
- We give ourselves to God before we give our money - 2 Corinthians 8:5
- God wants us to give with a willing heart - 2 Corinthians 8:3
- You cannot serve God and money - Matthew 6:24

How much do we give?

- God wants us to be generous - 2 Corinthians 9:6-9
- God wants us to give sacrificially - Matthew 12:41-44
- God wants us to give proportionately - 2 Corinthians 8:14,15

Three things that we should know:

- God will supply what I need - Philippians 4:19
- God will multiply what I give - 2 Corinthians 9:10

- God will reward my investment - Matthew 6:19-21

What about **tithing**? The word tithe means "a tenth". This is the word that we use for the practice of giving one tenth of your income for the work of God. This was first noted way back in Genesis 14:17-20 when Abraham gave a tithe to a man name Melchisedek, who was a priest of the Most High God. He is referred to again in Hebrews 7. This practice was later required by all of God's people in the Law of Moses. If God's people were required to do this much before Christ came, surely we should at least do the same today. The tithes are what we use to pay the ministers and workers in the church and to pay the regular bills each month, just as they were then used to pay for the Levites and the tabernacle back then. In the last book of the Old Testament God told the people of Israel that they were robbing Him by not paying their tithes.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' In tithes and offerings."

Malachi 3:8

He goes on to say:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty."



Malachi 3:10-12

Love

Above all else, we are commanded to love God and to Love others. When asked what was the greatest commandment of all, Jesus replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:37-40

The scriptures teach us that:

- We have a debt of love to the brethren and to all men (Romans 13:8-10)
- If we work without love, our works mean nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)
- **Real love means that we are committed to one another even through misunderstandings (1 Peter 4:8)**

Questions for discussion

Based on the following scripture references, what are some of the things that we are responsible to do as members of our local church and how are we to do them?

Hebrews 10: 22-25

Romans 12: 3-6

Malachi 3: 8-12

Matthew 22:37-40

Vision

In our last three sections we have answered 3 questions:

1. Why should anyone become a member of a church?
2. What are the benefits of membership?
3. What are the responsibilities of membership?

These 3 questions are generic; in other words, they would apply to any Christian no matter what church they would attend. In this final section we are going to look at two questions that are specific to our church. They are:

1. What is the vision of our church? (In other words, "Where are we going?")
2. What are the values of your church? (In other words, "What is really important to us?")

What do we mean by vision?



In order for us to answer the first question, we really must understand what we mean by the word "vision". The word simply means, "to see", so when we talk of our "vision" we are really asking the question "What do you see for the future of the church?" Where do you see it going? How do we see it developing? What does it look like in 5 or 10 years? Where are we going?

There are also two things that are quite important as well. First, it is important to understand that vision is not something that we just dream up out of our heads, or the mere whim of an individual or group of people. When we speak of the vision of the church, we are trying to determine what God wants us to see and where God wants us to go! In Proverbs 29:18 it says:

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he who keeps the law, he is blessed."
Modern King James Version*

The word "vision" here is also translated "revelation", "guidance" and "prophetic vision". Also the word perish is translated "cast off restraint", "uncontrolled", and "without order". In another translation it says:

*If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves; but when they attend to what he reveals, they are most blessed.
The Message*

If we do not understand where God wants us to go, we begin to run into all kinds of problems. Often complaining, murmuring, backbiting, strife, division, fits of anger, rage, complacency, and even plain laziness is the result of a lack of vision.

The second thing that is important to understand is that God almost always speaks to leaders to establish His vision and direction. Have a look at 1 Samuel 9 (particularly verse 9) and Acts 16: 1-10 (paying attention to verses 9 and 10). These are just two passages where God used leaders to establish vision and direction

So, what has God said to us?

Our Vision

The ministry of Christians in Action UK began when God spoke to Elgin Taylor (founder) through a verse in the bible found in the book of *Isaiah*, chapter 25 and verses 6 through 8, which reads:

Here on Mount Zion the LORD Almighty will prepare a banquet for all the nations of the world---a banquet of the richest food and the finest wine. Here he will suddenly remove the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all the nations. The Sovereign LORD will destroy death forever! He will wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes and take away the disgrace his people have suffered throughout the world. The LORD himself has spoken.

Isaiah 25: 6-8 (GNB)

In this passage 3 phrases are keys to the vision of C in A: "... **prepare a banquet for all the nations of the world...**" "... **remove the cloud of sorrow that has been hanging over all the nations...**" and "...**wipe away the tears from everyone's eyes...**" We believe that our church is to become a place where people of many cultures and nations can be brought out of darkness and built up through sound teaching and strong personal relationships. We desire our church to be a place of *security* and *safety* where people can come to be nurtured and fed from God's word. If you can picture in your mind a large mountain where people can come up to and be saved from destructive floodwaters, valleys filled with thieves and robbers, and low clouds that prevent individuals from seeing the way forward, then you have a picture of our fellowship.

Building people through church growth!

Our first aim is to be a church that continues to build up people and develops strong personal relationships. We want people from various **ethnic groups** within our community to feel welcomed and accepted, and for every member to receive **teaching** and **personal spiritual help** from God's word. We aim to have **small groups** meeting regularly in various parts of town, so that friendships are developed as members reach out to family and friends.

Building community through service!

We also recognise that our congregation is only a small part of the **wider church** in our community. We therefore aim to work together with other believers to establish the God's kingdom in our city. We also want to affect our community for good, so we seek to develop **social projects** that serve our neighbourhoods.

Building nations through missions!

Finally, we aim to do our share of extending God's kingdom by **building through missions**. For us this means supporting mission by encouraging **existing mission projects**, sponsoring the **training of national leaders** when invited, and giving **financial assistance**. We also aim to send workers on both short and long-term mission projects.

Our Values

The purpose of this page is to define those things, which we at Christians in Action Church consider to be important to us and make us distinct.

1. **Dynamic Worship** - *John 4:23,24*. Our goal is to develop spiritual worship as a priority in the life of the church and of every believer. We aim to train worship teams in each fellowship and also to encourage the use of spiritual gifts.
2. **Effective, Fervent Prayer & Spiritual Warfare** - *James 5:16; Ephesians 6:12,18*. Realising that apart from fervent prayer nothing can be accomplished, we aim to encourage regular times of prayer through small groups, regular Church prayer meetings and special times of consecration and prayer and fasting.
3. **Biblical, Relevant Teaching** - *Exodus 18:20*. It is our desire that we declare to each believer the whole counsel of God in a practical way, which has a lasting effect. We plan to do this through preaching, special seminars, training programmes and especially through small groups and lay leadership.
4. **Caring, Personal Fellowship** - *Exodus 18:21-23; Ephesians 4:12-16*. We consider personal fellowship, friendships, social life and counselling a priority. We therefore aim to make small groups the heart of our Church life and look to home group leaders to assist the pastoral team in providing visits, counselling, and close friendships with the congregation.
5. **Team Leadership** - *Acts 15:2, 6; Ephesians 4:11-16*. We value the New Testament concept of plurality of elders who function as a team in submission one to another. Elders are the chief decision makers in the church and are called as "shepherds" who are examples to God's people. (See also 1 Peter 5:1-7; Hebrews 13:7,17)
6. **Ministry Gifts** - *1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Romans 12:3-6a*. We aim to develop and encourage the gifts and abilities of every member. As intimate relationships develop through small groups gifts can be assessed and opportunities to experiment with areas of service may occur.
7. **Missions & Evangelism** - *Acts 1:8*. Each Church would make evangelism a high priority and have a mission budget aimed at supporting missionaries. Each should also look for God to raise up people from within to go to the foreign field on both short and long term basis.
8. **Multicultural** - *Isaiah 25:6-8*. Our aim is to minister to the communities in which our churches are planted. We would therefore seek ways to reach and welcome those of various cultures within each area.