

Lesson 3 – Membership of a Church - Outline

I Requirements for membership in a New Testament church.

- A. Regeneration.
- B. Baptism.

II The three (3) ways a church receives members.

- A. By a profession of faith in Jesus Christ followed by scriptural baptism.
- B. By a church letter.
- C. By statement.

III Privileges of a Baptist church member.

- A. The government of a Baptist church is a simple democracy.
- B. The many privileges of a Baptist church member.

IV The obligations of Baptist church members.

- A. Attend the services of the church.
- B. Participate in the worship and ordinances of the church.
- C. Contribute liberally and regularly in church support.
- D. Use our talents in a way we can in the advancement of the work of the Lord.
- E. Live a life that will never bring reproach upon the Name of Christ or His church.

V How membership in the church ceases.

- A. By death.
- B. By exclusion.
- C. By letters of dismissal from one church to another of like faith.

Questions:

- What are the two requirements for membership in a Baptist church?
- What are the 3 ways a Baptist church receives members?
- What is the government of a local church called?
- Name some of the membership privileges of a Baptist church.
- What are some of the obligations of a Baptist church member?

- How does a Baptist church membership end?

Discussion:

Why should every Christian join a church?

Assignments:

- Memory scripture: Matthew 17:17
- Assignment: Be prepared to give a definition of a “theocracy.”

Lesson 3 – Membership of a Church

I Requirements for membership in a New Testament church.

A. Regeneration.

1. Nowhere in the New Testament is there the slightest hint that any, save (except) those claiming regeneration, were admitted to the churches.
2. Always salvation was a prerequisite to church membership. Read:
 - a. Acts 2:41-42 *⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. ⁴²And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
 - b. Acts 2:47 (from verse 46) *⁴⁶And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷**praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***
3. Church members were always addressed as “children of God”, “saints in Jesus Christ”, “followers of the Lord”, etc.

B. Baptism

1. The New Testament order was to hear the word, believe it, and then be baptized. Read (again) Acts 2:41-42 *⁴¹Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*
2. All church members in the New Testament were baptized believers.
3. To become a member of a Baptist church, one must make a public confession of salvation, and be baptized.

II The three (3) ways a church receives members.

- A. By a profession of faith in Jesus Christ followed by scriptural baptism. This means the individual states that he has accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and that he wishes to be baptized into the church.

- B. By a church letter.
 - 1. It is customary then for the sending church which the individual is a member of, to “grant a letter” stating that he is a member in good standing.
 - 2. These “letters” are exchanged for the purpose of church record keeping and to verify the status of the application.

- C. By statement. Sometime it is impossible, due to loss of records, etc. for a member to get a sending church letter. He is then received on his own statement of the fact he has been saved and baptized.

III Privileges of a Baptist church member.

- A. The government of a Baptist church is a simple democracy. Read:
 - 1. *Acts 6:5 ⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: [proselyte = a person who has converted from one opinion, religion, or party to another... a newcomer].*
 - 2. *Acts 15:22 ²²Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:*

- B. The many privileges of a Baptist church member.
 - 1. Direct access to God – no priest or Pope.
 - 2. You can approach God for one and another as Christians.
 - 3. You are free to participate in the mutual fellowship with the saints in the observance of the ordinances and in the spread of the gospel.

4. You possess the Word of God for yourself and interpret it as you feel lead by the Holy Spirit.
5. You are free in conscience to recognize no authority but God in all manners of of religion.

IV The obligations of Baptist church members.

- A. Attend the services of the church.
- B. Participate in the worship and ordinances of the church.
- C. Contribute liberally and regularly in church support.
- D. Use our talents in a way we can in the advancement of the work of the Lord.
- E. Live a life that will never bring reproach upon the Name of Christ or His church.

V How membership in the church ceases.

- A. By death.
- B. By exclusion. This is the duty of the church when a member persists in walking disorderly.
- C. By letters of dismissal from one church to another of like faith.

Questions:

- What are the two requirements for membership in a Baptist church?
- What are the 3 ways a Baptist church receives members?
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- How does a Baptist church membership end?

Discussion:

Why should every Christian join a church?

Assignments:

- Memory scripture: Matthew 17:17
- Assignment: Be prepared to give a definition of a “theocracy.”

Notes on regeneration:

From: <https://www.gotquestions.org/regeneration-before-faith.html>

Regeneration is the act of God by which a spiritually dead person becomes spiritually alive. [Regeneration](#) is the “[born again](#)” experience mentioned in [John 3:3](#) (*³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*) The question is when regeneration occurs. Is regeneration a result of salvation or does regeneration result *in* salvation?

At first glance, this issue might seem to be inconsequential. But it is actually one of the key disagreements in the [Calvinism vs. Arminianism](#) debate. [[Arminianism](#), a theological movement in Protestant Christianity that arose as a liberal reaction to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.]

For a Calvinist, if God does not first regenerate people before they trust in Christ as Savior, that faith is something people produced on their own, making salvation dependent on them instead of on God. For an Arminian, if God must regenerate people in order for them to believe, there is no genuine free will, and the call to believe is pointless.

For the Calvinist, [Ephesians 2:1](#) is key: “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins.” Without Christ, people are spiritually dead. Dead people cannot do anything. A spiritually dead person can no more do anything to remedy that situation than a physically dead person can climb out of a grave. Therefore, God must regenerate people, making them spiritually alive, before they can trust in Christ as Savior ([John 3:8](#) *⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. ⁸The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*)

For the Arminian, **all** of the biblical calls to believe in Christ as Savior are key (e.g., [John 3:16](#); [Acts 16:31](#)). If people are unable to believe without God first regenerating them, the biblical calls to believe are pointless. God does not command people to do what they are incapable of doing. Calling people to believe in Christ when they are incapable of doing so on their own, and then judging them for their lack of faith, would be unfair and unjust. Further, if God must regenerate people in order for them to have faith, essentially “installing” faith in people, God would essentially be forcing people into salvation.

So, does regeneration come before faith? [John 6:44](#) says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws him**, and I will raise him up at the last day.” [Second Corinthians 4:4](#) declares, “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” **It is undeniable that God must do something to enable people to believe. At the very least, God must [draw people to Christ](#) and open their eyes.**