

# Chapter 2

## A God Added Church Membership

“And the Lord added daily such as  
should be saved.” – Acts 2:47

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We've seen so far that it's absolutely imperative, if we're going to be the church that people need, that we do not become success oriented, desiring to be accepted and loved by the world. When that happens the church will adjust their methods accordingly, adding to and subtracting from the very plain ways of God. The result is the church becomes the world. In becoming the world, they become what people want. As soon as they become the world and what people want, they cease to be what people need. We are, of course, in the last days and it should mean much to us that we would be the church that people need, not what people want.

In John 15, Jesus speaking to his church said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world the would love his own.”* You see what you have to do, what a church has to do for the world to love them. You have to be of the world. *“But because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*

When a church becomes what people want rather than what people need, they no longer have a God purpose or function. They lose their distinction as the Lord's church. They lose their identity as the Lord's church. Being a church that people need requires that the church stay separate and distinct from the philosophy, reasoning, the ways, and pursuits of the world. With all that being said, what this means is, who is received into membership in the Lord's churches becomes a matter of great importance, becomes a matter of great consequence. It is what makes up the membership, that is the church. So, receiving members is of great importance and great consequence.

In Acts 2:41-47, *“Then they that gladly received his word”* [that is they were saved, they] *“were baptized: and the same day were added unto them”* [the them referring to the Jerusalem church] *“about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs*

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*were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And 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, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

Notice verse 41, “*there were added unto them about 3,000 souls.*” At the time of this addition, the church consisted of 120 members. Acts 1:15 tells us that. But, in one day, about 3,000 people were saved, were baptized, and were added to the Lord's church. There are three very important words. Saved, baptized, and added to the Jerusalem church. We read in verse 47, “*... and the Lord added daily such as should be saved.*” The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. From verse 41 and 47 we learn that the membership of one of the Lord's churches should consist of the saved, baptized and God added. That's what this chapter is about, “A God added church membership”. This is absolutely imperative, absolutely necessary if a church is going to be what people need rather than what people want.

To be the church that people need, proper membership is crucial. What this means is, we have to maintain a proper perspective concerning membership. The focus is never to be upon being loved by the world. None of us should get overly upset if the world does not love us. No one should get upset, in a panic mode, that the world does not love Home Baptist Church. That's just the way it is. There's only one way to get them to love you and that's to become them. Either that or the Lord saves them and changes them. The focus must never be upon being loved, the focus must never be upon being accepted or popular.

Do not go into worry mode because the world does not accept us, does not find us popular, and does not even find us desirable. If we do what we're supposed to do, the

world will not find us desirable. The focus must always remain the same; that is doing God's business, God's way, for His honor, and for His glory. We are here to do the business of God. The business of God must be done in God's way. It must be done for His honor and for His glory.

The mission, focus, and concern of the church is not about being successful by the world's standards of size and numbers. May I say that you are successful if you do what God tells you to do. That's success. Being focused upon the world's definition of success must never be the case. Christ commissioned His churches to preach the gospel, not to seek members, not to seek attendance records. The church is to be commission oriented, not numbers oriented, not success oriented. Numbers must never ever become the focus, must never become the goal. If it ever becomes the focus and the goal you will have to adapt improper methods to reach your goal. That's why we do not set goals. "Well by such and such a date we want "X" amount of people in church." That is a wrong focus. That's a very, very dangerous thing.

An improper focus or an improper goal leads to a lowering of biblical standards. If you want "X" amount of people by such and such a date, you're probably going to have to lower some standards. That's not our business. That's not what we're here for. We're here to uphold God's standards. We're here to do God's business in God's way. If you want numbers, it means you're going to have to make it easier for people to become a member. This is not the time, nor has it ever been the time, to make it easier for people to be a member of one of the Lord's churches. Putting the emphasis on making a decision instead of experiencing a changed life has allowed millions of unsaved people to become members of churches. We must be content to sow and to water then depend upon God to give the increase.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:6-8, Paul said, "*I have planted, Apollos watered;*" [that is I preached and Apollos came behind me and preached some more] "*but God gave the increase.*" It's not membership drives that give the increase,

it's God that gives the increase. *“So then neither is he that planteth”* [which was Paul] *“any thing, neither he that watereth;”* [which was Apollos] *“ but God that giveth the increase.”* In other words, it's not Paul that is to get the glory, it's not Apollos, it's not any other preacher, it's not any other pastor, it's God. That's what we're here for. It's God's business. It's not to elevate people, it's not to elevate men, it's not to elevate some pastor, it's to exalt God. We are to be content to sow the seed, we are to be content to water the seed, and depend on God to give the increase. That's our business. If we ever get sidetracked from that, we cease to be what people need, and we become what people want. If we're going to be the church that people need we must be diligent in the work that God has given us do. We must leave it to God to do His work.

In Acts 2, talking about membership, it says it is God's work to add, to set members in His churches. In verse 47 we read, *“... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”* In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:18, *“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”* Verse 28, *“And God hath set some in the church first apostles...”* Those verses tell us that it's not our work to add to the church, to set into the church. It's God's work to add, it's God's work to set individuals in the church. Since it is God's business to add, we do not have to do anything outside of what God has commissioned us to do to appease and to pacify people so that they will join, or to appease and pacify people so they will stay. It is God that adds to His churches. We must never ever get away from that truth. Hold on to that. It is God that does the adding. We have to just hold on to that.

Consider the blessing of a God added membership. It's a special thing to be added to the Lord's church. It is a blessing when God adds to and sets individuals in His churches. He does so for His own pleasure, purpose, for the good of His church. I try very hard never to get in the mind set, *“Wow, that person would make a good church member.”*

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There's only one way they'll make a good church member and that's if God adds them. It doesn't matter how faithful they are somewhere else. The only way they can be a good church member here is if God adds them. We must always keep that in mind. That will keep individuals, that will keep preachers from proselytizing in other churches, trying to get other peoples church members. You just wait for God to do the adding and that will save a lot of trouble down the road.

In Acts 2:41, it says, “... *added unto* ...” [added unto them which was the church.] Then in verse 47, “... *the Lord added to the church...*”. To add to is to combine. What is added becomes a part of whatever it is added to. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:18, “... *but now hath God* ...”. “Hath God” is a deliberate and purposeful act. God has done something. “... *but now hath God set in* ...”. God has set in. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:28, “... *God hath* ...”. Again, a deliberate and purposeful act, “... *set some* ...”. “Set some” is indicative of choice. When God adds someone to the church, He chose to do so because He didn't add all. He made a distinction. God hath set some in the church.

Then notice what it says, “... *first...*”. That indicates order. God adds, He does so by choice, and He does so in a particular order. It may not be God's will for somebody to be a member of this church right now, but six months or a year from now, it might be. God has His order. God has His time. First apostles.

God adds to His church, God sets in His church, and whatever is added to becomes a part of. Whatever is set in becomes a part of what that individual has been set into. What I'm saying is God does not add one, set one in, for them to be separate from the church. He adds them and sets them in that they be part of the church, not separate and apart from the church. When God added you to this church, you became a part of it. Always keep that in mind. When God adds, He's making a person a part of Home Baptist Church.

If somebody comes and says, “I would like to be a member, but I do not agree with what you believe here, and I

do not agree with this part of the covenant.” What they are saying is, “I want to be a member, but I want to be separate from you all in these areas.” That's not how God adds. As soon as they say that, warning lights, warning bells ought to be going off. “This person isn't being added by God.” They're not being added by God. They want to be a member of the church and yet remain separate from it. That is a common thing today. People want to be members but they want to be separate from the church, what the church believes, what the church practices, they want to be separate from the fellowship of the church. That's not being a member. They want you to keep them on the membership rolls even though they have made it clear, “I want to be separate from you all.” That's not a God added membership. In a God added membership, the individual that is added has become a part of. A choice had been made by God. God has set some in the church. That is why we read in 2nd John 1, the church is called what? The elect lady. She's an elect lady. A God added membership.

You see the church is much like a tree. If you want to add to a tree, you don't pick up a dead branch from off the ground and tie it to it. That's not adding to that tree. That branch becomes an encumbrance. In order to add there has to be a live branch. There has to be a grafting in, and that takes skill. So it is with church membership. You and I, we can go out and gather all the branches we want and tie them everywhere we want to, but that's not adding to the church. What you have then is mess. It takes the skill of God to add to His church. In Acts 2:41-47, it is plainly seen that they that were added did not encumber, did not hinder the church. They were truly an addition in a positive way. I believe that those whom God adds will truly be an addition.

When one knows they didn't just, one day decide, “You know, I kinda like the people there at Home Baptist Church. They have a nice looking building and I like the song leader, I don't care for the pastor, but I can live with that. I like this person and that person. I think I'll join Home

Baptist Church.” There's a big difference between that and knowing that God added you. Knowing that God set you in this church. What that does when you know you've been added, when you know you've been set in, it makes a difference in the way you view your church membership. When God adds you, you view your church membership entirely different than if you're just joining a club. When God adds it's an act of grace, it's a privilege, it's an opportunity, it's a blessing. When God adds us we realize it's an obligation, we realize it's a responsibility. It makes a difference. When we know we've been added, we view our church membership differently.

We also view the church of which we are part of, differently. If you just join, you can get mad at so and so and leave and go and join somewhere else, but if you've been added, it's not easy to leave. If you've been added that church now becomes home. That church is home, an object of love and appreciation. Think of everything home means. Commitment. I have a commitment to these people. Everyone that's been added by God has a commitment to the church to which they've been added.

Home speaks of sharing. When you're added to a church you want to share. You want to share your talents, you want to share what you have with that church. You want to serve. There's a relationship. Oh, it only takes being in the service for a few minutes and you realize, “You know what, the Lord added me here, but these people aren't perfect.” That doesn't mean you love them any less. You begin to build a relationship with the people in that church.

Home also speaks of responsibility. When God adds you to a church, that church becomes your home church, you have a responsibility. Home also means accountability. In a home people are responsible, in a home people are accountable to one another. It's no different with church. Yet, today people want to join a church, they have no real appreciation, they're not willing to make any type of commitment, they're not interested in serving, they're really



not interested in a relationship with the body, they don't want any responsibility. "And who are you to tell me what to do?" They want no accountability. God is not adding them. When God adds you to a church, that church becomes special. Oh, it's far from perfect, but it becomes special. It's a very special place. God adds.

God's way works! We do not have to make Home Baptist Church desirable to those on the outside. That's not our business. You preach the truth, you pray that God will show them the truth, and if that happens, then, guess what? You've become desirable. We must simply be commission oriented. Leave it to God to add, set in whom He sees fit, when He sees fit.

A God added membership acts as a body. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, Paul uses the analogy of a human body when speaking of the Lord's church. Think about a human body. A body is prepared, a creation by design. The church is a body. The church has been prepared. Who has prepared it? God has. The church is a creation by design. God's design. A God added membership. A body implies organizations. Our bodily parts aren't just thrown together. There is an organization, there is a framework, there is a systematic grouping of parts, and it becomes a functional entity. That's how it is with a church when the Lord adds. If you get ahead of the Lord, and I begin to add members, and you begin to add members, you no longer have a body. You have a mess. You're no longer what people need, you're what they want.

These human bodies are not an accident. They're not just thrown together in some haphazard way. A body has been put together by the Lord in a suitable order. He put together these human bodies in a suitable order. When God adds to His church, He does so in a suitable order. You may say, "Oh I wish God would add so and so. I wish this one or that one or this one." You leave God's business alone. When God does the adding the order will be suitable. He does so for a definite purpose. This is true in our human bodies, this is true of the church.

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God has set scriptural bounds that his churches are to follow concerning the receiving members. When you begin to do the adding, or when you lose sight that God does the adding, you begin to overstep scriptural bounds. “Now so and so had been disciplined from another church of like faith. But you know what, we need a piano player, and they know how to play the piano, so we'll make an exception.” You've got a mess. You've now overstepped scriptural bounds. God only adds by following the rules that He has already established. If you have to break the rules, if you have to overstep the bounds, God isn't doing the adding. When that happens, you begin to neglect church discipline, you begin to neglect the authority of other churches. Soon you'll begin to neglect scriptural baptism, and all standards are lowered.

“But oh, things are great, we're growing.” Are you? You go out and add a bunch of branches, tie a bunch of branches on a tree in your backyard. Does that mean that tree is growing? No! What it does is look ridiculous. That's what happens today with churches. You have a mess. Things get ridiculous, because people are doing the adding instead of God. If we're going to be the church that people need, the body must be strong, the body must be healthy. We have to maintain the strength of the body, the strength of the church, the health of the church.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, we see that every member must be content with their place and office in the body. You might be the ear, you might be the foot, you might be the finger, you might be the toe, you might be the hand, you might be the leg. You have to be content with whatever you are, wherever God has placed you in the church, knowing that if God has added me, I have a definite place in the body. I am a definite part of the body. I believe that everyone that God adds, has a definite place. Everyone that God adds has a definite part, a crucial part of the body. There has to be contentment with wherever God has placed us.

As you read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, there has to be unison with the other parts, contributing to the well being of the

body. Your legs work together. If your left leg wants to go this way and your right leg wants to go that way, you're not getting anywhere. They work together. The same with your arms. They all work together. If a church is going to be what they ought to be, there will be unity. I don't believe unity is a real big problem when you just leave it to God to do the adding.

Oh, there will be disagreements, because we're people. But there won't be major divisions in the church. People will put aside their opinions, they'll put aside their hurt feelings for the good of the church. We see it here all the time. Those people are added. That proves, that shows an added membership. "Well I don't necessarily agree, but the church votes and that settles it." That's an added membership. Everyone has a right to disagree. You have a right to vote against anything this church brings up. You have that right. We're not going to look down upon you if you don't want to spend \$200 on something, you'd rather spend \$150, and you vote against it. But once the vote is taken, you go along with it. That's what a God added membership does. It's no longer an issue, it's never to be brought up again. "Oh I didn't agree with that in the first place." It's settled.

You see, a God added membership doesn't have any trouble doing that. It amazes me, when God adds, the different personalities people have. He puts them all together. If you and I were putting together a company, we probably wouldn't have done it that way. When God does it, it works. He just blends them together and it works. There has to be unity. In a God added membership, there will be unity. We've seen it here. We can talk to six different people about what we should do about something and we may get six different opinions. Come business meeting time, the church votes, it's settled. It's done. That is evidence of a God added body. When someone storms out and carries on for 3 or 4 months, that's evidence that God probably didn't add them. They're being manifested.

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Also, you read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, there is a relation of the members to the head. Every member of our body is related to our head. Colossians chapter 1 tells us that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The head is indispensable to the body. You can cut off my left arm, I'll continue to live. You cut off my head, I'm dead. So it is with the church. Any member can leave, members can pass away, pastors can leave, pastors can pass away, but the church continues on, because no one is bigger than the church, no one. We have to stay connected with our head. There is one that we absolutely can't do without. Jesus said, "Without me, ye can do nothing." We must always keep that in mind.

No doubt, just like with our human bodies, churches suffer losses. You have a member of a church that passes away and sometimes that can be a great loss. It can be a tremendous loss. It doesn't end the church. "Oh, what are we going to do now?" Don't worry about that. That's God's business. I do not doubt, I've seen it happen many times, churches suffer great losses. We can all think of church members that have gone on to be with the Lord here. It is a loss, but the church continues on. But, if you lose sight of Christ, you're done.

It is the responsibility, the head directs the body. Signals are sent from our brain to our arms, to our legs, to our feet, to our hands, to our fingers. When communication is stopped between my brain and my left arm, my left arm ceases to function. It becomes useless. It becomes a hindrance. It gets in the way. It's the same with church members. If communication stops between any member of the body and Jesus Christ, that member becomes useless to the body. That member begins to get in the way of the body. Now the other parts of the body have to do twice the work to make up for this dead limb over here. Do not lose communication with your head, Jesus Christ. That is the sure way of being the church that people need is for all the membership to stay in communication with Jesus Christ. We will continue to be the church that people need.

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We don't want to be the church that people want because what people want today is contrary to the word of God. We want to be here when Jesus comes. We want to be the church that people need when He comes. Will our membership grow? It might. Will it get less and less? It might. But, our business is to do what God told us to do, and leave all the rest to God.

Oh, I pray that God would add. I trust that you do the same. We pray, "Lord, that you would add to the church". I've seen it too many times, people that have added themselves, and I'll be honest with you, don't take offense, but I don't want them. I really don't. It's nothing but trouble. It doesn't matter how much money they put in the offering plate. That won't make up for the trouble that they cause. It won't make up for all the ways they just get in the way.

We pray that God would add. We do not go out asking people to join. We just pray that God would add them. That God would add them. It scares me, personally, for people to become members that aren't God added. A God added membership is crucial.

Do you know that you've been added to one of God's churches? Does it not make a difference to just know, "This is where I belong. I might not like the winter, I might not like a lot of things, but this is where I belong." You know what? There's no better place than where you belong. There's no better place on all the earth. "Oh, I'd sure like to live in such and such a place, I'd like to live in a warmer climate." Is that where you belong? There's no better place than where you belong.

If God has added you to a church, that's where you belong. Isn't it wonderful to know, "I belong somewhere, I belong somewhere." I'm glad to know that the Lord adds to His churches. That we would always keep that in mind, that the Lord does the adding. There's nothing wrong with praying, "Lord add". We ought to all be praying that. But, just keep in mind the Lord does the adding.