

## Why Were You Baptized? (Reason #2)

Baptism is clearly taught in the New Testament, but baptismal practices differ among various denominations; so also the reasons for baptism. In this article I want to explore a second reason that some people have been baptized.

### **Reason #2: I was baptized to join a local church.**

In the Bible we read about churches in different cities. However, they were all a part of a global church community whose membership was comprised of all Christians in all places.

When the missionaries in the 1st Century traveled from city to city, they never talked/wrote about ‘placing membership’ or being baptized to be identified as a member of a church in a specific town/location. Such ideas are foreign to the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul traveled to many cities, but never *identified* himself only with the church in one city or another. He only identified himself with *one body* of believers:

**For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.** —Romans 12:4–5

Notice especially that Paul included himself with the body of believers in Rome by saying, “So we, who are many....” Yet, he was writing these words while in a different city. So, he considered all Christians to be a part of the body of Christ regardless of location.

Paul also wrote:

**There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.** —Ephesians 4:4–6

So, while the members of the body of Christ may be dotted around the globe in various locations, all of these Christians are members of *one body*, namely, the body of Christ.

Also, did you notice that there is only “one baptism.” A baptism ritual associated with a local membership is different from the disciple-making baptism that Jesus instructed.

**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

—Matthew 28:19

Now, what about the idea of ‘placing membership’ or ‘identifying with’ a congregation?

Again, the only ‘membership’ that we can find in the Bible is membership in the body of Christ. Individual church groups that have membership rules in addition to the Scriptures are just making things up.

Of course, common sense tells us the importance of communication. It might be that phrases like *placing membership* or *identifying with a congregation* are simply ways of communicating a person’s intentions of being a regular part of a local church. It makes sense to let folks know that you are more than a visitor, that you are not just passing through town. So, by all means, communicate your intentions, but you do not need to be baptized (again) to become a member of a *local* church.

So, if you were baptized to ‘join a congregation,’ you should return to the Bible to see why Jesus instructed his apostles to baptize believers. Then, look at the examples in the Book of Acts.

You’ll find your answer.

(Reason #3, next week)