

# Membership in the Universal Church

by A.W. Tozer

---

*To be a true member of a local church, one must first be a member of the universal church, reborn and filled with the Holy Spirit.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:40, Acts 2:47, Ephesians 2:19

**Topics:** "Church Membership", "Universal Church"

---

## Description

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the distinction between membership in the local church and the universal church, arguing that true membership requires a spiritual rebirth and acceptance of Christ. He critiques the practice of allowing anyone to join a church without proper spiritual transformation, asserting that one must first be part of the universal church, which Jesus redeemed with His blood. Tozer stresses that accepting Christ inherently means accepting His people, as the church is the body of Christ. He encourages believers to seek the Shepherd by being among His flock, reinforcing the idea that rejecting the church is akin to rejecting Christ Himself.

---

## Transcript

Sometimes people come into the local church who have never come into the universal church. People join a church who have never been born into the true church. Some churches actually throw the doors open and say, "Now we'll sing the closing hymn for those who want to unite with the church. Come to the front." Al Capone could come in and join. Nobody asks any questions; they just take in anybody. I do not believe in that at all, and I know you do not either. I believe that if you are going to get into a local church, you should first be in the universal church, which Jesus purchased with His own blood. You should get into the church with rebirth, the Holy Spirit and regeneration. Then you should join a local assembly.

It is impossible to receive Christ and reject His people.

How do you find the Shepherd? Go where the sheep are! If you do not know where the Shepherd is, then go where the sheep are. All else being equal, that is where you will find the Shepherd. Whoever receives Christ must receive His people too. Jesus said, "He who receives you receives me" (Matthew 10:40a). Whoever rejects the bride rejects the Bridegroom, and whoever rejects the flock rejects the Shepherd. I think that is clear enough.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-tozer/membership-in-the-universal-church/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**