

# The Biblical Evaluation of John 1:35 – 39 and Its Inference for Dual Membership and Church Growth among Selected Churches in Sagamu

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## Abstract

## Original Research Article

Dual membership is a phenomenon that calls for intellectual debate in the contemporary society in Nigeria. Existing literatures had discussed on Church membership with little or no discourse on the evaluation of John 1:35 – 39 and its implications for Christians in the selected Churches in Sagamu. This study examined the impact of dual membership and church growth among selected churches in Sagamu, with inference to biblical evaluation of John 1:35 – 39 with a view to examining the biblical perspectives to dual membership and its implications for Church growth. Qualitative method was employed to gather data both in primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes an exegetical evaluation of John 1:35 – 39 which was supported by unstructured interview of 25 randomly selected people among the selected Churches. The secondary source included Bible commentaries, books, journals, articles, internet sources. The data collected were analyzed using content analysis. Dual membership was not biblical rather the pericope encouraged the total switch of disciples in-between Jesus and John. It is observed that dual membership though not biblical, is a new trend among Christian Churches in Sagamu due to various reasons such as geographical locations, seeking of miracles, varieties in worship, charismatic leadership, family ties and diversity of beliefs. The study concludes that dual membership is erroneously assumed to be a channel of Church growth. The study recommends among others, Christian discipleship, intentional Bible teaching, doctrinal formulations in line with the Bible and loyalty to a particular denomination.

**Keywords:** Dual Membership, Church Growth, John 1: 35-39, Sagamu, Evangelism.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of dual membership has raised important questions about identity, community, and belonging within the church. As individuals navigate their faith journeys, the blending of affiliations with multiple ecclesiastical bodies can lead to a rich wall-hanging of spiritual experience but may also present challenges in terms of commitment and accountability. Dual membership is the act of an individual having interest in attending more than one Church for many reasons best known to such person such as cultural or family ties, diversity of beliefs, geographical reasons and community involvement and still be attending other Churches. It often refers to as an individual who identify with and participate in more than one religious denominations. It explores the complexities of religious affiliation in the society particularly how individual navigate multiple church memberships amid a pluralistic religious environment<sup>1</sup> such as Sagamu. Schaefer stated that, in a religious context, dual membership is characterized by participation in the rituals and governance of multiple faith

communities, which can sometimes lead to theological or ideological conflicts but also to a broader community<sup>2</sup>.

However the concept of dual membership is becoming broad in the sense that there are many individuals today who do not at any time attend other churches physically but through social media have passionate interest or addicted to more than two other church online programs. It has been observed that many denominations are of the opinion that having huge number of members in the church attendance is a yardstick for church growth but not knowing that most of the members are from different Churches. Dual membership involves an individual members recycling two or more Churches to add to the attendance of other Churches. In fact the real trend of gathering members for Christian events such as crusade or seminar today is becoming disquieting. The process of mass mobilization of members from various denominations for a specific Christian program is one of the indexation for dual membership for church growth to some church leaders.



Donald noted that Church growth is deeply rooted in the scriptural teachings. The great commission is often cited as a foundational base for evangelism and growth<sup>3</sup>. Wagner collaborated that the process of contextualizing the gospel to different cultures will facilitate Church growth<sup>4</sup>. Church growth implies the processes and strategies at which an increase in the church membership and influence occur. Holistically, George Barna pointed out that church growth involves the numerical growth and spiritual growth of a Church. It encompasses the community engagement of the Church and leadership development of members to be a great leader in the society. Church growth can be achieved through various means including effective marketing, evangelism, small groups, worship services that appeal to different demographics and fostering welcoming atmosphere. The ultimate goal is often not just to expand numbers but to cultivate a thriving, vibrant faith community<sup>5</sup>.

The Gospel of John holds a significant place, offering profound insights into the nature of discipleship, church membership and the dynamics of early church growth. Wright stated that John 1:35-39 presented a pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry as He calls His first disciples, illustrating not only their immediate response to His invitation but also the transformative nature of their encounter with Him. This passage raises important questions about the nature of commitment, loyalty, and community in the context of Christian discipleship<sup>6</sup>. It also serves as an essential foundation for examining the implications of dual church membership among contemporary congregations, particularly in the context of selected churches in Sagamu.

Dual membership has sparked intense debate among church leaders, theologians, and scholars, with some arguing that it undermines church unity and growth, while others see it as a means of spiritual exploration and enrichment. Many scholars have also engaged in strong discourse on church growth and various variables that enhance church growth. But the lacuna discovered is that documentation has not established the fact that dual membership is not a factor for church growth just as many church leader claimed in our contemporary age.

By evaluating the biblical account in John 1:35 - 39, this dissertation aims to explore how early discipleship models can inform modern understandings of membership and communal growth within the churches and the impact it will have on church growth and unity in the selected churches in Sagamu. This research will contribute to the discourse on ecclesiology and the dynamics of church participation, providing insights that can enhance the vitality and outreach of churches in Sagamu and also propose strategies for promoting healthy church membership and growth the discipleship.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN THE BIBLE

### Concept of Church membership in Old Testament

The concept of church membership in the Old Testament is a topic of interest among scholars. While the Old

Testament does not explicitly mention 'church membership', we can explore the ideas of ancient Jewish communities and their relationship with God. According to David Norczyk, to be a member of Israel's family, 'one must be born into a Jewish family linked to a larger tribe of people. The tribes of Israel were originally derived from the twelve sons of the patriarch, Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen 32:28). Israel's heritage, however, included God's people dating all the way back to Adam in 4143 B.C'<sup>7</sup>. The Jewish has a relationship with Yahweh bolded with a covenant. The Old Testament emphasizes the covenant relationship between God and His people. This covenant was established through the Abrahamic Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant is a pivotal event in the Old Testament that has significant implications for church membership. According to Gordon J. Wenham, 'the Abrahamic covenant is a foundational concept in the Old Testament. It provides a framework for understanding Israel's relationship with God and her role in the world'. In Genesis 12:1-3, God makes a covenant with Abraham, promising to make him the father of a great nation, to bless him, and to make him a blessing to all nations. This covenant is reaffirmed in Genesis 15:1-21 and 17:1-27. The Abrahamic Covenant establishes a corporate identity for God's people, who are called to be a blessing to all nations. This covenant creates a covenant community, where members are bound together by their shared faith and obedience to God. Old Testament church membership was not just about individual believers but about being part of a community<sup>8</sup>. The Israelites were organized into tribes, clans, and families, with each member having a role to play in the community (Numbers 1:1-54, 2:1-34). Charles Hodge in his systematic theology explained that 'the Abrahamic covenant was a divine institution, by which Abraham and his descendants were constituted a peculiar people, separate from the rest of the world. It was a covenant of grace, founded on the promise of God, and not on any merit or condition on the part of man'<sup>9</sup>. According to John Calvin, 'the covenant made with Abraham was not only a covenant of grace, but also a covenant of faith. Abraham's faith was not only a condition of his own salvation, but also a means of conveying the blessing to his posterity'<sup>10</sup>.

The Mosaic Covenant, also known as the Sinaitic Covenant, is the covenant God made with the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24). According to Gordon J. Wenham, the Mosaic covenant is a key aspect of Israel's theology. It provides a framework for understanding Israel's relationship with God and her role in the world. On Mount Sinai God gave the Israelites the Law, which consisted of the Ten Commandments and other regulations (Exodus 20:1-17, 21:1-23:33) as a sign of his covenant with them to make them his peculiar people. If they obeyed the Law, God promised to bless them and if otherwise they would inherit a curse (Leviticus 26:1-46, Deuteronomy 28:1-68). There, Israel also promised to obey God's laws and commands (Exodus 24:3-8), as his covenant people. The Mosaic Covenant also established the priesthood, with Aaron and his descendants serving as priests (Exodus 28:1-5, 40:12-16). Church membership in the Old Testament involved participating in worship and sacrifices. The Israelites were required to gather at the tabernacle or temple for



worship, sacrifices, and festivals (Leviticus 1:1-7:38, Deuteronomy 16:1-17)<sup>11</sup>.

Historian Grabbe noted that ‘the concept of a covenant between God and Israel is central to understanding the Old Testament. This covenant, as described in the Hebrew Bible, forms the basis of Israel's relationship with God. In terms of church membership specifically, the ‘idea of a ‘*qahal*’ or assembled congregation of Israelites is relevant to understanding the communal aspects of ancient Jewish worship and community’. These scholars offer valuable perspectives on the Old Testament and its relevance to understanding church membership and community in ancient Jewish contexts. In fact, the word *ekklesia* sums it up generally the way the entire Israel gathered before God in terms of assembly to worship Him<sup>12</sup>. The word assembly which implies *ekklesia* is used in various places in the Old Testament. According to Chris Hutchison ‘the word *ekklēsia* is used 65 times in the Greek Old Testament. Most of the time, the word refers to the assembly of Israel when the people of God would gather together before Him. Chris Hutchison stated that ‘by the time the New Testament was written, the word *ekklēsia* did not mean “called out ones.” Instead, it had the basic meaning of ‘assembly’ in the centuries before Christ’s birth, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. This Greek Old Testament, called the Septuagint, was the Bible used by many Jews in the time of Christ. Many Christians today are surprised to find out that the word *ekklēsia* is used by one count 65 times in the Greek Old Testament<sup>13</sup>. The Westminster Seminary California's insight into the use of the Greek word ‘*ekklesia*’ in both the Septuagint and the New Testament highlights a significant connection between the Old and New Testament concepts of church membership. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which was completed around 250 BCE. In the Septuagint, the Greek word ‘*ekklesia*’ is used to translate the Hebrew word ‘*qahal*,’ which refers to the gathering or assembly of Israelites. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:10, the Septuagint uses ‘*ekklesia*’ to describe the gathering of Israelites at Mount Horeb. Most of the time, the word refers to the assembly of Israel when the people of God would gather together before Him. For example, Deuteronomy 9:10 speaks about the day when ‘the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly’. The day of the *ekklēsia* is the day when they gathered together before the Lord’<sup>14</sup>.

The concept of church membership in the Old Testament is rooted in the idea of a covenant community. Church membership in the Old Testament had a visible, outward expression seen in the formation and history of the Hebrew people. Many who appeared to be church members were not actually members of the covenant because their hearts were not right with Yahweh. Their external religious observances were actually despised by God because they had become rote rituals. These people were just going through the motions. Even those who were zealous for the rites and rituals became proud in their perceived success at personal observance. A remnant within the Jewish nation loved and served Yahweh. They believed what was revealed to them, and for this they were counted as righteous before God. These were the true church members of the Old Testament.

## Concept of Church membership in New Testament

The concept of church membership in the New Testament is a topic of significant interest among scholars. Scholars have debated the concept of church membership in the New Testament with some arguing that it is a biblical concept and others claiming that it is a modern invention. Scholars like Gerald L. Borchert argued that ‘the New Testament used language that implied membership, such as ‘*Méλος*’ (*Melos*) meaning ‘member’ (Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31), *Σῶμα* (*Sōma*) which implies the ‘body’ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). This word *Σῶμα* was used in various contexts like physical body referring to the human body (Matthew 6:22, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31) and the Church as the body of Christ, metaphorically describing the church as the body of Christ with Christ as the head (1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 4:1-16, Colossians 1:18) and the Greek word like ‘*oikos*’ ‘household’ (Ephesians 2:19)’<sup>15</sup>. The argument of Gerald L. Borchert with reference to the above Greek words conveyed the idea that ‘the Church in the New Testament is a unified, interconnected body, with each member playing a vital role. Church membership in the New Testament refers to the relationship between believers and the local church community. This relationship is characterized by (1.) Commitment: Believers were called to commit themselves to the local church community (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25). (2.) Participation: Members participate in the life of the church, including worship, fellowship, and service (1 Corinthians 12:4-31, Ephesians 4:11-16). (3.) Accountability: Members are accountable to one another and to the church leadership (Matthew 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

## The New Testament uses several metaphors to describe church membership

- (i) Body of Christ: The church is described as the body of Christ, with members being interconnected and interdependent (1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Ephesians 4:1-16).
- (ii) Family of God: The church is described as the family of God, with members being adopted as children of God (Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 3:26-4:7).
- (iii) Temple of God: The church is described as the temple of God, with members being living stones built into a spiritual house (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Peter 2:4-10).

## Church members in the New Testament are called to

- (i) Love one another: Members are called to love one another, just as Christ loved them (John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-21).
- (ii) Serve one another: Members are called to serve one another, using their gifts and talents to build up the body of Christ (Galatians 5:13-14, 1 Peter 4:10-11).
- (iii) Support the ministry: Members are called to support the ministry of the church, including the support of pastors and missionaries (1 Corinthians 9:1-14, Philippians 4:10-19).





Church membership in the New Testament is a vital concept that emphasizes the importance of believers being committed to and participating in the life of the local church community.

Another argument about the Church membership in the New Testament reflected the fact that Church membership in the New Testament has its root in the covenant of God with Israel in the Old Testament. David E. Garland argued that ‘church membership is rooted in the covenantal relationship between God and his people, as seen in the Old Testament and continued in the New Testament (Matthew 26:28, 1 Corinthians 11:25)<sup>16</sup>’.

We also have argument against Church Membership as a Biblical Concept as follows; Scholars like Roger Olson argued that the New Testament does not explicitly teach church membership as we understand it today<sup>17</sup>. Wright emphasized that the New Testament’s focus on the universal church, rather than local church membership (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:1-16)<sup>18</sup>. Andrew Walls noted that the concept of church membership as we understand it today is a product of Western cultural and historical context, rather than a biblical concept<sup>19</sup>. But I want to defer from the submission of Scholars like Roger Olson, N.T Wright and Andrew Walls because the Greek word ‘*Μέλος*’ (Melos) meaning ‘member’ was used with various contexts such as physical member and Church member. The word Melos emphasized the important of each individual member within the body of Christ, highlighting their unique role and contribution to the overall unity and functioning of the Church.

## IDEOLOGY OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

There are different arguments of biblical scholars on the ideology of church membership in the 21st century. The traditional school of thought argued that church membership is rooted in the New Testament, citing passages such as Romans 12:4 - 5 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, which described the church as a body with many members. Gerald L. Borchert argued that church membership was a biblical concept rooted in the New Testament’s description of the church as a body with many members<sup>20</sup>. Also according to Scot McKnight, church membership is a necessary implication of the New Testament’s teaching on the church as a body and family<sup>21</sup>. Jonathan Leeman stated that Church membership was a biblical concept that is rooted in the New Testament’s teaching on the church as a covenant community<sup>22</sup>. Likewise, Mark Dever collaborated the argument of the traditional views that church membership in 21st century is a necessary implication of the New Testament’s teaching on the importance of believers being part of a local church community (Acts 2:42 – 47, 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31)<sup>23</sup>. These scholars contend that this imagery implied a formal, covenantal relationship between believers and the local church. I believe that the church as it is in 21st century has her formation and concept from the Scripture. The idea of the church structure and doctrine are picture deduce from the biblical concept. But some contemporary scholars with a critical view have challenged the interpretation of the traditional view that the New Testament does not explicitly teach church membership as we understand it today. They argued that the early church was more focused on the universal

body of Christ rather than local church membership. These authors challenged the idea that church membership, as understood in modern times, is directly rooted in the New Testament.

Some of these scholars who argued that church membership, as understood in modern times, is not rooted in the New Testament are as follows; Roger Olson argued ‘that church membership is a modern invention and not explicitly taught in the New Testament’. Contrary to this opinion the New Testament taught about the Church and no Church can exist without membership. Therefore, Church membership is prominently mentioned in the scripture. Gregory Boyd contended that the New Testament emphasised the universal body of Christ, rather than local church membership<sup>24</sup>.

## Evaluation of John 1:35 – 39

John 1:35-39 describes an essential period in the Gospel of John, where Jesus is introduced as the Lamb of God by John the Baptist. Jesus being called the Lamb of God indicates that He came to score Himself as a sacrificial Lamb to set people free from sins. The key words in these verses of the scripture are John the Baptist, the disciples, Jesus, Lamb of God and stay with Jesus. The disciples of John the Baptist did not engage themselves with dual membership the way its happen today in our contemporary society. The only left John the Baptist’s ministry and went to be the disciples of Jesus after John himself introduced Jesus to them as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist's Testimony when he saw Jesus walking by and declared, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world involves a strong message!’

The strong message of John 1:35 implies that having known that his ministry must decrease while that of the Messiah must increase, knowing his imperfect ministry as that of a forerunner, John the Baptist convincingly started to introduce his disciples to Jesus as an encounter with the ministry of Jesus. ‘*Ὁ Ἰωάννης*’ (*Ho Iōannēs*) simply refers to John the Baptist who is to point the attention of people to Jesus who was the long - expected Messiah. In the New Testament the first person to introduce people or point the attention of people to Jesus was John the Baptist. Two of his disciples were with him when Jesus was walking around the place. ‘*Ἐκτὼν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ δύο*’ (*Ektōn mathētōn autou duo*) which signifies ‘Two of his disciples’. This emphasizes the specific individuals involved. One of these disciples was Andrew and the other disciple’s name was not mention in the narrative. The Greek word ‘*Μαθητῶν*’ (*Matheton*) is the genitive plural form of ‘*Μαθητής*’ (*Mathetes*), meaning ‘disciples’ or ‘followers.’ The root of this word is ‘*μανθάνω*’ (*manthano*), which means ‘to learn.’ The root ‘*μανθ*’ (*manth*) conveys the idea of learning or acquiring knowledge. In the context of the New Testament, ‘*Μαθητής*’ refers to individuals who follows a teacher or master, learning from them and adhering to their teachings. In John 1:35, ‘*Μαθητῶν*’ specifically refers to the disciples of John the Baptist<sup>25</sup>. The word ‘*matheton*’ (*μαθητῶν*) is primarily an adjectival form derived from the root ‘*manthanein*’ (*μαθην*), which means ‘to learn’ or ‘to learn’ in classical Greek. The



Semantic Analysis of *'matheton'* is an neuter singular adjective, meaning 'to be learned' or 'something learned' (used as a predicate adjective). It is often used in the context of teaching, learning, or something that is knowable or learned. The root *'manthanein'* is one of the fundamental Greek words for learning or understanding, from which many derivatives are formed, including nouns, adjectives, and related terms like 'mathematics' (literally 'things learned'). *'Manthanein'* (*μαθην*) is the root verb meaning 'to learn' and related nouns is *'mathema'* (*μάθημα*) meaning 'lesson,' 'learning,' or 'study' while the related adjectives *'matheton'* (*μαθητόν*) implies 'learned' or 'that which can be learned.'<sup>26</sup>

Bultmann discussed the concept of discipleship in the New Testament, emphasizing the relationship between a disciple and their teacher<sup>27</sup>. The term *'Μαθητῶν'* in John 1:35 vividly conveyed the bond between John the Baptist and his followers setting the stage for their encounter with Jesus and their potential transition to becoming disciples of Christ. This connotes that the disciples learned from their masters in the primeval Jewish community. They learnt and acted on the instruction of their teacher. This habitual practice prompted the two disciples of John the Baptist to respond proactively to the statement 'Behold the Lamb of God' and they followed Jesus as disciples in order to learn anew from Jesus unswervingly and continuously. This title, 'Lamb of God,' *Ἰδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ* (*Ide ho amnostou Theou*) signifies Jesus' role as the sacrificial lamb who would bear the sins of humanity. Morris in his commentary on John noted that John the Baptist's declaration of Jesus as the 'Lamb of God' was a significant title that highlighted Jesus' sacrificial role in taking away the sins of the world<sup>28</sup>. Carson also argued that the phrase 'takes away the sin of the world' emphasized the universal scope of Jesus' redemption underscoring that his sacrifice was not limited to a specific group but was for the entire world<sup>29</sup>. The Greek word *'ἀμνός'* (*amnos*) which is 'lamb' suggested Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. The one to suffer and died for humanity.

In the ancient Israel 'lambs' are used for sacrifices mostly for the atonement of sin. In the Old Testament, God gave Abraham a ram to replace Isaac for sacrifice (burnt offering) on the mount Moriah whereas in the New Testament Jesus put himself in the place of a lamb as an atonement for humanity. Therefore, Jesus is introduced as the lamb to suffer and laid down his life for mankind. The word *'Θεοῦ'* (*Theou*) is the genitive form of *'Θεός'* (*Theos*) which means 'of God'. This word is noteworthy in Christian theology and it refers to God the Father as family member to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Semitic roots of the concept of *'Theos'* in Greek has parallels with Semitic languages, such as Hebrew and Aramaic, which were spoken in the region where early Christianity emerged. The Hebrew word *'עֶלֹהִים'* (*Elohim*) and the Aramaic word *'ܐܠܗܐ'* (*Alaha*) both convey the idea of God or deity. In order word *'Θεοῦ'* (*Theou*) indicates Jesus' divine origin. The 36 verse of the Chapter 1 of the gospel of John implies that as John the Baptist perceived that Jesus had started to portrait himself as the divine Pascal lamb and anointed one in the community he first

introduced Him to his disciples declaring that Jesus was the divine Messiah for the deliverance of humanity.

By the testimony of John the Baptist, the two of John's disciples that heard him speak immediately followed Jesus. Jesus turns and asks them, 'What are you seek?' *'Στραφεῖς'* (*strapheis*) is the aorist passive participle of *'στρέφω'* (*strephō*) meaning 'to turn.' The root *'στρεφ'* (*strephe*) conveys the idea of turning or changing direction. The use of *'Στραφεῖς'* in John 1:38 underscores Jesus' proactive engagement with those seeking him, setting the stage for his question, 'What are you seeking?' *Καὶ θεασάμενος* (*kaitheasamenos*) means 'and seeing'. *Θεασάμενος* (*Theasamenos*) is derived from *'θεάομαι'* (*theomai*) which implies 'to see' or 'to behold'. This involves Jesus carefully seeing the disciples following him. *Αὐτοὺς ἀκολουθοῦντας* (*autousakolouthountas*) suggests the phrase them following. This verb suggests a deeper level of perception indicating that Jesus not only notices their approach but also observes their intentions or actions. The question Jesus asked the two disciples of John the Baptist revealed the impression of Jesus to know their desire and how strong they were in following him. This verb suggests a deeper level of perception, indicating that Jesus not only notices their approach but also observes their intentions or actions.

The Greek phrase *'Τί ζητεῖτε;'* (*Ti zēteite?*) is derived from *Τί* (*Ti*) which indicates an interrogative pronoun meaning 'what' and *Ζητεῖτε* (*Zēteite*) the present active indicative form of *'ζητέω'* (*zēteō*) meaning 'to seek' or 'to desire'. *Ζητ'* (*zēt'*) conveys the idea of seeking, searching, or desiring. *Τί ζητεῖτε* is Jesus' question to the disciples, 'What are you seeking?' This question invites the disciples to articulate their desires, expectations, or intentions. They responded by asking where he was staying, indicating their desire to learn more about him and spent time with him. They also called Jesus 'Rabbi' which is translated Teacher (v 38). Keener suggested that the disciples' question "Rabbi, where are you staying?" (v. 38) indicated their desire to learn more about Jesus' teachings and spent time with him reflecting a common practice in rabbinic discipleship<sup>30</sup>.

Köstenberger noted that Jesus' question 'What are you seeking?' (v. 38) served as an invitation for the disciples to articulate their desires and expectations setting the stage for a deeper understanding of Jesus' identity and mission<sup>31</sup>. There is a strong desire in the two disciples to follow Jesus to where He stays having identified Him as Rabbi and hear His testimony from John the Baptist so as to learn the more from Him. Having noticed their desire to be with Him, Jesus invites them to 'Come and see' (*ἔρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε*), (v. 39) and they spend the day with him. This encounter marks the beginning of their discipleship and sets the stage for their future ministry with Jesus. Brown commented that Jesus' invitation to 'Come and see' (v. 39) was an open-ended invitation that allowed the disciples to experience and understand Jesus' identity and teachings firsthand<sup>32</sup>. Murray suggested that the phrase 'they spent the day with him' (v. 39) implied a significant and formative experience for the disciples marking the beginning of their discipleship and relationship with Jesus<sup>33</sup>. This passage



highlights Jesus' identity as the Lamb of God, emphasizes the importance of personal encounter and discipleship, and showcases the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

## Dual membership in Sagamu

Dual membership has been a critical issue in the society today. It is a phenomenon whereby an individual has affiliation with multiple religious ideologies, social or organisational groups simultaneously. From the research carried out in Sagamu metropolis, there have been several causes traced to dual membership within the community.

Osibamowo pointed out that one of the main reason that made individual member of difference churches to have desire for dual membership in Sagamu community is interest in varieties of worship. There are things that other Church worship contained which are not inclusive in their own Church worship. This circumstance made them engaged in other Churches programs. Members have desire for prophesy and once their church is not passionate about prophesy such members attend another church where such can be offered during word. Furthermore, mode of prayer in churches varied, some engaged in zealous prayer while some churches maintained inaudibility in prayer<sup>34</sup>.

According to Ajetunmobi and Babalola, when the location of an individual Church member of a particular Church is long distance to the Church. Some members resolved to attend the program of the Church nearer to their residence. In other word, lack of financial buoyance to transport members to Church due to long distant also contributed to the fast trend of dual membership in Sagamu<sup>35</sup>. They resolve to attend their previous Churches occasionally base on their previous affiliations.

Abiodun stated that the disposition of Church leaders today towards gathering people for programs such as revival or crusade is seriously encouraging church dual membership. For a crusade to take place organized by any Church or ministry in Sagamu, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) would be approached to mobilize various Church members for such crusade. This method of organizing programs has been contributing greatly to trend of dual membership in the society, due to the charismatic nature of various Church leaders<sup>36</sup>. Funke agreed that the charisma of some gifted leaders in various individual church has contributed to the upsurge of the dual membership in the society. Church members develop personal interest in different Church leaders that satisfy their spiritual needs to enhance their Christian faith<sup>37</sup>.

Oni opined that there are various Church members who have serious bond for their family church. Occasional such members attend their family Church programs and even made their financial contribution towards the growth of the Church<sup>38</sup>.

AbiodunBabalola and Taiwo John Abiodun were of the opinion that many people today within the Church community are miracle seekers. A lot are facing severe challenges and they want instantaneous solution through the ministry of the Church. Due to this fact, the trend of dual membership among Churches is becoming more customary in the society<sup>39</sup>. Abiodun also commented that Churches have different mode of welfare

programs for their members. While some Churches have robust welfare package periodically some do not bother to engage their members with such. These welfare packages motivate the interest of people to engage in dual membership among Churches<sup>40</sup>

Abiodun and Babalola claimed that dual membership is also as a result of individuals' social networks and relationships. Network theory suggests that individuals are connected to others through various social ties, and these ties can lead to multiple group affiliations. Dual membership can provide individuals with access to resources, information, and social support from multiple networks<sup>41</sup>

Despite the fact that dual membership have various reasons for its emergence, there are negative implications of this phenomena. It could lead to confusion, unhealthy rivalry among Churches, doctrinal conflict, spiritual lukewarm and egotism, leadership tussle and many others. However, the positive aspects of it are dynamism, calculated evangelism, and enrichment of Church leaders. In our contemporary church community, dual membership should be discouraged. People should not engage in recycling Churches irrespective of any reason. Members should remain in one Church with being focused in learning about Jesus passionately and all the doctrine of the same Church. Just as the disciples of John the Baptist left him and stayed permanently with Jesus to learn all the Christian faith doctrines, the present day Church should also adherent to such principle.

## The Implications of John 1:13-19 for Dual Membership

The illustration of John 1:13 – 19 does not really support dual membership at any point. As a matter of fact, dual membership as it is being practiced among Church community in Sagamu metropolis and in the world at large cannot be traced to the scriptural teaching. It is a world invention by some leaders from different Churches through mobilisation, inducement and hoax snatching of members from other Churches to their own organised program. This passage only states the transition of the disciples of John the Baptist to Jesus having introduced Jesus to them as the expected Messiah and the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. When the disciples of John the Baptist heard from reliable source that Jesus was the Lamb of God for a definite purpose in the life of humanity, they were promptly persuaded and followed Jesus to stay with him as his disciples. The decision they took changed their orientation from following John the Baptist again. They desired to understand Jesus and learn from his doctrine. The movement of these disciples from John the Baptist to Jesus was a unique one. It buttresses being focus on reality, commitment and discipleship. The disciples were the first to encounter Jesus' ministry. They went through discipleship process and were commission to affect humanity positively in their generation. Dual membership though not biblical, yet it has become common phenomenon in Sagamu metropolis due to the ideology of some Church leaders who supposed it to be a yardstick for Church growth. Dual





membership should not be seen as a way of growing the Church. This study discovers that it has numerous disadvantages such as unhealthy rivalry, leadership manipulation of members, doctrinal confusion and others.

## CONCLUSION

Dual membership has been a common trend among Churches in Sagamu metropolis due to many reason as applied to an individual who engages in it. The trending of it is not a biblical teaching on the basis of the exegetical evaluation of John 1:13 – 19. This phenomenon should not be encouraged within the Church community because it has not positively contributed to Church growth from any avenue.

For Church growth to be stimulated, this study recommends that members should maintain a strong commitment to a particular Church of interest. Church leadership should concentrate on Christiandiscipleship through intensive Bible teaching. Doctrinal formulations in line with the Bible should be put in place by individual denomination. Also, spiritual engagement and loyalty to a particular denomination must be encouraged. The Christian religion body should discourage dual membership in the Christian community.

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34Personal interview with MrsOluremiOsibamowo of Anglican Church, 70 years, May 22, 2025, 12:57 and Mrs Elizabeth AdetutuAdaramola, 50 years, May 26, 2025, 19:02pm

35Personal interview with Chief MrsTaiwoAjetunmobi of St James' Anglican Church Ayepe Road, Sagamu, 62year, June 16, 2025, 14:24pm and MrAbiodunBabalola of Redeemed Christian Church, May 22, 2025, 13:26pm

36Personal interview with Pastor Taiwo John Abiodun of Christ Apostelic Church OkeSekunDerin Sagamu, 51year, July 11, 2025, 12:02pm

37Personal interview with MrsFunke of Redeemed Christian Church of God Corner stone parish GRA Road Sagamu, 42 years, July 12, 2025, 16:31pm

38Personal interview with Pastor Taiwo John Abiodun of Christ Apostelic Church OkeSekunDerin Sagamu, 51years, July 11, 2025, 12:02pm and Personal interview MrAbiodunBabalola of Redeemed Christian Church, 65 years, May 22, 2025, 13:26pm

39Personal interview with MrsBunmi Oni of Grace Anglican Church GRA Sagamu, 60 years, July 12, 2025, 18:38pm

40Personal interview with Pastor Taiwo John Abiodun of Christ Apostelic Church OkeSekunDerin Sagamu, 51years, July 11, 2025, 12:02pm

41Personal interview with Pastor Taiwo John Abiodun of Christ Apostelic Church Oke Sekun Derin Sagamu, 51years, July 11, 2025, 12:02pm and Personal interview Mr Abiodun Babalola of Redeemed Christian Church, 65 years, May 22, 2025, 13:26pm

