

Why Membership Matters

All-Team Training — 07.03.18

Setting Up The “Why” Of This Training

- Covenant Church Membership is a big deal to Frontline Church
- As a church, we take every July and ask all of our Covenant Members to renew their Covenant to the church
- The Membership Renewal process is a system we built out so *that* we can pastor and disciple the people God has entrusted to us
- We do this for several reasons: (1) We want to have a membership database that is up-to-date and accurate, (2) We want our members to personally have a chance to revisit and reaffirm the covenant that they made to the church, and (3) We want to give our members another space where they can ask questions of us...
- Without this process in place, it would be far too easy to slip into having a meaningless database that we shove in a drawer somewhere and never paid any attention to
- Therefore, we take all of July to intentionally focus on what we are working so hard to fight for the other 11 months out of the year...A healthy Church Membership
- What I want to do today is to give you a vision of God’s heart for Church Membership so that you can help lead through this process with full hearts and clear heads

Definition: “Church Membership is a counter-cultural relationship with God and other Christians in a local church in which they make a covenant with each other to love God, love people, and push back darkness.”

Transition Note:

- With that in mind, I want to ask you to think out some thoughts about something...

Question: What Are The Highest Values In Our Cultural Moment?

- (*Autonomy, Self-Expression, Freedom, etc...*)

Contrasting Cultural Values With Christianity’s Values

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 → What are some of the values of this passage?

There are 4 different things I want you to see about Church Membership:

(1) Church Membership Is Counter-Cultural

We Were Saved Into The Body:

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” — 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

- What Paul is saying is that when Jesus saved us, He didn't just save us from sin, He also saved us into the Body of Christ, the Church
- If you are a Christian, you are tied to Jesus (that's an amazing truth) - But you aren't just tied to Jesus, you are also tied to Jesus' church
- When Jesus saved you, He made you an actual member of His body - That word "member" isn't describing a card-carrying member of a club, it's referring to becoming an actual part of the body, like a hand, or kidneys, or eyes, etc
- Look at the way the Apostle Paul describes what it means to be a "member" of the Body in 1 Corinthians 12:21...

"The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, ²⁴ which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." — 1 Corinthians 12:21-27

- We are no longer autonomous individuals —> Now we are connected to and dependent upon each other
- We are no longer free to live however we want —> Now we are accountable to God and to each other
- We can't experience true flourishing as Christians on our own —> Now we are actually in need of each other for growth and health

A Common Question People In Oklahoma Ask:

- *"If I truly am a member of the Body of Christ, why do I also need to become a member of a specific local church?"*

(2) Church Membership Is Hyper Local

The Church Is Both Global AND Hyper Local:

- In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul *isn't* composing a generic letter written to generic Christians in the "capital C" Church
- Rather he is specifically addressing a particular local church in Corinth, with specific pastors, specific leadership, specific systems and structures, and specific Christians that were a part of that local church...This follows the pattern we see all over the New Testament
- The New Testament refers to the "Church" not just in a spiritual sense or in a strictly universal sense...It also refers to the Church in a hyper local sense

New Testament Evidence Of Local Church Membership:

(1) Each Local Church Had Specific Pastors & Leaders

"Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith." — Hebrews 13:7

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” — Hebrews 13:17

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.” 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

(2) The Church In Ephesus (the largest church in the N.T) Kept A Church Roll (1 Tim. 5)

(3) Consider The “One-Another Commands Of Scripture

(Show the 59 “One-Another” Commands In Scripture)

Here Is The Point —> Hyper Locality Matters:

- You and I were not saved merely into a Spiritual / Global / “Mythical” Church - We were also saved into a local, physical church where we actually live out our Christianity in real, tangible community
- If church membership isn’t a Local reality, than you can’t actually be known, you won’t actually submit to any leadership, you can’t actually learn to walk out the “one-another” commands of Scripture, and you can’t actually be held accountable for sin
- It’s so much easier to love the “ideal” than the reality - Local Membership helps us love the reality of the church

“What church community takes away from us is our false freedom to soar unencumbered, like the birds, believing that we are mature, loving, committed, and not blocking out things that we should be seeing. Real churchgoing soon enough shatters this illusion, and gives us no escape, as we find ourselves constantly humbled as our immaturities and lack of sensitivity to the pain of others are reflected off eyes that are honest and unblinking.” — Ronald Rolheiser

(3) Church Membership Is Covenantal

- One of my favorite stories comes from Greek Mythology - It’s the story of Odysseus (or “Ulysses” in Latin) — *Explain Story*
- Odysseus made a willing decision to have his sailors tie him to the mast - That was a decision that he regretted when he sailed past the Sirens and yet was so grateful he made once he got far enough away and couldn’t hear the Sirens song
- Covenant Membership is like that for us as Christians - It’s tying us together, in a real and tangible way, for our good

A Covenant Between Three Parties:

- Church Membership is a covenant between three different parties:
 - Elders make a covenant to the members that we will do what the Bible calls us to do
 - Members make a covenant to the elders that they will submit to and follow their leadership
 - Members in the church make a covenant with other members of the church to walk out what the Bible calls us to walk out together

“Church involvement, when understood properly, does not leave us the option to walk away whenever something happens that we do not like. It is a covenant commitment, like a marriage, and binds us for better or worse.” — Ronald Rolheiser

(4) Church Membership Is Formational

The Counter-Formation Of The World vs. The Formation Of The Church:

- The world shapes and forms what we love, what we desire, what we crave, what we think we want/need, etc...
- God designed membership in the local church to form us into the image of Jesus
- Learn to see Church Membership as one of the most important disciplines you can build into your life...

“In an age that encourages maximum autonomy and the transgressing of limitations, perhaps we need to...see the institution of church as a spiritual discipline. We get the idea that making the choice to wake up early and read our Bibles or to commit to regularly giving away our money to a charity or to fast may not always be pleasurable, but in the discipline of these things that we become more Christlike. Yet we expect church to always be pleasurable, enriching, and exciting. Maybe the limitations of church, the discipline of regular attendance, the commitment it requires, also teach us to be Christlike. Maybe we need to reimagine church in our minds as a spiritual discipline, which teaches us the value of delayed gratification, of personally investing in change, of becoming more like Jesus.” — Mark Sayers

- How God Uses Church-Gathered
- How God Uses Church-Scattered

Where Do We Go From Here?

(1) I want you to get a vision of God’s heart for church membership so that you can engage this Covenant Renewal process with the right perspective

- This isn’t about mere maintenance —> It’s about discipleship

(2) Renew your own commitment to Jesus to do whatever He wants you to do to help lead people into a Counter-Cultural, Hyper Local, Covenantal, and Formative relationship with God and His Church