



Surveying the Land: ***What's The Church & How Do I*** ***Become A Part Of It?***

The Purpose of this Class:

1. *To explore the values and benefits of church membership*
2. *To examine what a "Church" really is*
3. *To explain the requirements and responsibilities of becoming a member of FBC*

The Goal of this Class:

That you commit to becoming a "FULL" member of FBC:

Feeding others

Ungirding others

Living and Learning from others

The Outline of This Seminar:

- * *Session One – Why Join A Church?*
- * *Session Two – Why Join **This** Church?*
- * *Session Three – Believing To Belong*

Session One: Why Join A Church?

I. How To View Church Membership

It's been said by someone that America today is a “nation of strangers”. The idea of *community* has been eroded today by so many factors: the automobile has made us a commuter society; television has made us a spectator society; social media has made us an invisible society. Real friendships are hard to make today, and many even question the need for making connections with others. “I am a rock, I am an island” sang Simon & Garfunkel a generation ago.



What effect do you think these societal changes have had on the church today?

With this in mind, it is important to understand that biblically speaking, church membership is primarily about:

building relationships within a caring community.

Membership is not primarily about qualifying to vote at business meetings, though that is important. It's not about being able to sit on a committee, or being able to teach a class, though these too are features of membership. Primarily, church membership is about being part of a Christ-like family.

“God sets the lonely in families.” (Psalm 68:6)

II. How Most People View Church Membership

When it comes to having a “spiritual life”, many people today believe that attending church – let alone joining a church – is irrelevant or unnecessary. Why do people think this way? What do they have against the church?

Objection! (What would *you* say to some of these arguments?)

- *But I don't like organized religion!*
- *But the church is full of hypocrites!*
- *Look at all the scandals!*
- *All churches talk about is money!*
- *I can worship God on my own – I'm a member of the universal church!*



*“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ... Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”
(1 Corinthians 12:12, 27)*

III. Ten Reasons Why It's Important That I Join A Church

1. The Church helps my love for people grow through fellowship.

- a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church?

Brotherhood

“Keep on loving each other as brothers.” (Hebrews 13:1)

- b. Why do I need to belong to a church to grow in love?

2. The Church helps my ministry to God grow through service.

- a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church?

Body

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord...To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 27)

- b. How can being a member of a church help me grow in ministry?

3. The Church helps my knowledge of God grow through teaching.

- a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church?

Building

*"You are...members of God's household, built on the **foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.**" (Ephesians 2:19-20);*

*"The [new converts] devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching.**" (Acts 2:42)*

- b. Why do I need to belong to a church to grow in knowledge? Can't I study on my own?

4. The Church helps my love for lost people grow through evangelism.

- a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church?

Battalion (army)

"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace...Fearlessly make known the gospel." (Ephesians 6:14-15, 19)

- b. Why do I need to belong to a local church for this? Can't I tell people about Jesus on my own?

5. The Church helps my love for God grow through worship.

- a. What's the metaphor the Bible uses to describe this function of the Church?

Bride

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:6-7)

- b. How does being a part of a church help my worship of God?

To help remember these first five reasons, just picture this in your mind:

**A Brotherhood of Body-Building
Battlion Brides.**



These same activities are commanded by our Lord in two famous Scripture passages, known as the “Great Commandment” and the “Great Commission”.

The Great Commandment: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” ~ Mark 12:30-31*

The Great Commission: *“...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” ~ Matt.28:19-20*

To love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength is **worship**.

To love your neighbor as yourself is **service**.

To go and make disciples is **evangelism**.

To baptize is to bring into **fellowship**.

To teach them to obey everything Christ commanded is **teaching**.

Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

Evangelism / Fellowship / Service / Teaching / Worship

But here are five more reasons why church membership is so vital.

6. Being an active member of a church gives time and space for significant relationships to develop.



Do you ever notice how some people pop around from church to church and never hang around for long? They get their toes stepped on or their feelings hurt and off they go. While there are certainly good and godly reasons why a person would find a new church home, do you think this should be a casual, easy thing?

Remember:

If you find a perfect church never join it - because you'll ruin it!

The key is not to find a “spectacular” church, but a faithful church. Then start letting relationships happen. Get to know others, and let others know you. Pray together. Study together. Struggle together. Guess what? You'll get hurt along the way. And you will inflict hurt along the way. You'll be misunderstood, just as you will misunderstand. You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll need to forgive. And you'll need to be forgiven. And through it all you will grow in Christ-like character and love, and at times you'll think that heaven has come to earth.

But you will never experience this until you unpack your suitcase and call one local church body home. It doesn't mean you can't enjoy fellowship with other believers and churches. But relationships will be birthed and will grow only when you are deeply connected to one church family.

Membership is a *covenant* we make with each other (sort of like marriage) that allows those deep connections to occur because it brings with it *commitment*.

7. Being a member of a local church has positive health benefits!

A study commissioned by the Center for Research on Religion and Urban Civil Society examined the relationship between religion and academics in nearly 10,000 students. One finding of the study was that more church attendance helps kids to improve academically (*Christianity Today*; May 21, 2002; p.60). Other studies have concluded:

- regular church attenders live longer
- when hospital patients are prayed for they recover more quickly
- religious people are less likely to abuse alcohol or drugs
- prison inmates who make a religious commitment are less likely than their counterparts to return to jail
- marital satisfaction and overall well-being tend to increase with church attendance

(*Christianity Today*, “*Health and the God-Factor*”; Oct.7, 1991, p.88)

8. Those who are not active members of a local church are unable to obey dozens of the Bibles' commands.

The New Testament contains 59 verses called "one another" verses, so-named because they teach how we're to relate to each other in church life.

Some Of The One-Anothers Of The New Testament:

- "Love one another..." (John 13:34 – 15X in NT)*
- "Be devoted to one another..." (Rom.12:10)*
- "Honor one another above yourselves..." (Rom.12:10)*
- "Live in harmony with one another..." (Rom.12:16)*
- "Stop passing judgment on one another..." (Rom.14:13)*
- "Accept one another, then just as Christ accepted you..." (Rom.15:7)*
- "Instruct one another..." (Rom.15:14)*
- "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Rom.16:16)*
- "Serve one another in love..." (Galatians 5:13)*
- "In humility, consider others better than yourselves..." (Phil.2:3)*
- "Do not lie to each other..." (Col.3:9)*
- "Bear with each other..." (Col.3:13)*
- "Forgive...one another..." (Col.3:13)*
- "Encourage one another daily..." (Heb.3:13)*
- "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds..." (Heb.10:24)*
- "Do not slander one another..." (James 4:11)*
- "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)*
- "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)*
- "Pray for each other..." (James 5:16)*
- "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling..." (1 Peter 4:9)*

Are there any of these things you can do on your own?

If not: then if you're not an active member of a local church you're disobeying God's commands!

9. Being an active member of a local church brings ownership.

"So in Christ, we though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." ~ Romans 12:5

What does *ownership* mean to you? Do you treat something differently when you "own" it?

10. Being an active member of a local church brings accountability and protection.

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” ~ Acts 20:28

a. What does *accountability* mean to you?



Did you know that the early Christians practiced discipline in their churches? Read 1 Corinthians 9:9-13.

Did you now that the early Christians vetted leaders? Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13.

Did you know that the early Christians didn't give money away to anyone who asked? Read 1 Timothy 5:9-16.

b. What does *protection* mean to you?

Here's a verse to commit to heart as we conclude session 1:

*“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
(Hebrews 10:24-25)*