

Being a Member of the Church

John 4:43-54

Online Sermon:

http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

Acts 2:1-4

“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.”

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

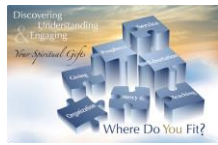
As we read in the book of Acts about the explosive growth of the early church, it's impossible to ignore the contrast between that time and our modern-day society. While the desire to belong to a group remains strong, many Christians today avoid church membership for a variety of reasons. Some have experienced conflict, judgment, or disappointment in previous churches, leaving them hesitant to commit again. Others have been disillusioned by public scandals involving fallen church leaders or are uncomfortable with the idea of being associated with a particular denomination. There is also the concern that joining a church will demand too much time or require them to give up certain personal freedoms.



Additionally, disagreements over the church's teachings or doctrines have caused many believers to avoid formal membership, leading them to prefer to move from church to church rather than settling down.

Despite the shortcomings of the church, it remains the bride of Christ. Yes, we are a group of flawed, sinful beings, yet despite our diversity and sharp differences of opinion, we are united through one Spirit, one baptism, one faith, one Lord, and “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6). When we became new creations in Christ, our hearts were filled with a zeal to share the comfort, grace, mercy, and forgiveness we've received with what we now consider our spiritual family (2 Corinthians 5:17). Church membership deepens this connection, providing a place to grow spiritually, receive support and encouragement, and hold one

another accountable in our walk with Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:11). It also gives us a platform to use our spiritual gifts, talents, and time to serve the body of Christ, offering us the opportunity



to contribute to something greater than ourselves. The eternity God has placed within us (Ecclesiastes 3:11) compels us to live lives worthy of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27)

— refusing to keep records of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5), confessing our sins to one another (James 5:16), and building each other up in the faith. While moving from church to church may offer the convenience of remaining unattached, as we mature in the faith, we are called—like the early church in Acts—to plant ourselves in a local church, using our gifts to further its mission. Today’s sermon will explore the many benefits of church membership, from the sense of belonging and spiritual growth to the joy of serving together. I hope to clear up any misgivings and encourage you to fully commit to this wonderful church God has provided for us.

Commitment to Doctrine and Teaching

Church membership offers the opportunity to grow spiritually and serve one another in the body of Christ, using our gifts to glorify God and build His kingdom. A couple I once met, who had been part of several denominations, asked about the



requirements for joining our church. This question opened the door for me to explain the core beliefs we hold dear in our church—beliefs that shape both our unity and our purpose. While we

are Baptist, we are first and foremost Christian, and our faith can be summarized by two key doctrines. First, we affirm the Lordship of Christ, meaning Jesus is Lord over both the church and the individual. Salvation is not achieved through works or penance (Ephesians 2:8-9), but by faith in Jesus Christ’s sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection—there is no other way to God (John 14:6). Salvation is more than reciting a prayer; it involves genuine faith and a heartfelt declaration of Jesus as Lord over one’s life (Romans 10:9). True faith in God must also be evident in our actions, with every area of a believer’s life and the church submitted to God’s supreme authority. We gladly

bow our knee to Him, the Lord of all, seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16). Our submission to Christ's Lordship is inseparable from our belief in the authority of Scripture, which shapes our understanding of God's will and directs the life of the church. Just as Christ is Lord, Scripture remains central to our faith and practice.

Equally important to our faith is our commitment to the authority of Scripture. In today's world, many Christians attempt to soften the truth of Scripture by interpreting it through a worldly lens or ignoring the parts that confront their lifestyle.



This has led to a culture where moral absolutes have been replaced by personal opinions,

and truth has become "gray." Yet, despite the Bible being a collection of writings spanning 3,500 years and multiple authors, it has remained untainted by human opinions because it was divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit. As 2 Peter 1:21 affirms, the writers spoke from God as they were moved by the Spirit. Therefore, we firmly uphold that "all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). Our beliefs

are not based on human traditions or modern ideas, but on the eternal truth of God's Word. While many books claim divine inspiration, their authenticity is measured only by their agreement with Scripture. Blessed is those who trust in God's Word so fully that they meditate on it day and night and live as sacrifices, walking in obedience to its precepts!

As Scripture guides us in truth and shapes our beliefs, it also provides us with sacred practices that deepen our faith. Chief among these are the two ordinances Christ gave us: baptism and the Lord's Supper. First, the Good Shepherd commands His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son



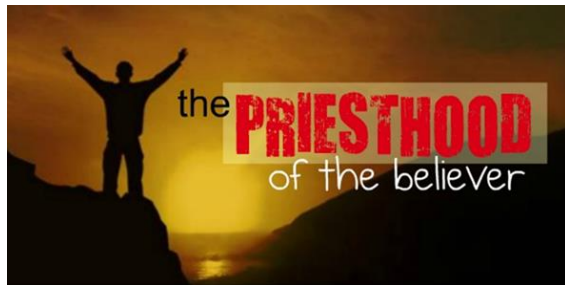
and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism, symbolic of participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:3-4), is reserved for believers, serving as a public declaration of faith in Him, though it does not impart salvation.

The second ordinance is the Lord's Supper, instituted by Jesus on the night He was betrayed, commanding believers to break the bread, symbolizing His body, and take the cup, representing the new covenant in His blood, in remembrance of His sacrifice. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the gravity of this ordinance, reminding us to examine ourselves before partaking, so we do

not incur judgment or suffer consequences for failing to recognize the significance of Christ's sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:23-27).

Priesthood of all Believers

As we reflect on the significance of the ordinances, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper, it becomes clear that church membership is not just about participating in practices but committing to the foundational doctrines that shape our faith. These core beliefs, which guide our lives and our community, form the bedrock of our identity as followers of Christ. With this understanding, let us now explore the deeper commitments required of every church member—starting with our shared commitment to doctrine and teaching. This commitment to doctrine naturally extends to how we live out our faith within the body of Christ. It is not just a matter of belief, but of action.



Membership in the church involves a dedication to follow God's higher ways and a willingness to live out these beliefs in service to one another (Isaiah 55:8-9; James 2:14-16). As Baptists, we believe that all believers are equal within the church, called to minister and serve God, regardless of differences in education, wealth, or gender. These differences

do not disqualify anyone from serving God or ministering to others. Each person has inherent worth and the ability to have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Baptists uphold the belief that no group has the right to compel others to believe or worship in a particular way. God has granted all people the freedom of choice, and Baptists have long championed the cause of religious liberty.

Church membership is a commitment to a spiritual family where we grow, support one another, and use our gifts to serve God and others. It's not just about attending but about fully engaging in a unified body to glorify God. It is more than simply joining a group; it's about finding a spiritual home where you desire to belong long-term. Membership is not restrictive—you



remain free to explore other churches, but should you leave, you will be missed and always loved. By joining, you publicly commit to building up and

encouraging one another, as Philippians 2:1-4 reminds us, placing others' needs above your own. As Baptists, we believe that under Christ's headship, every member is part of the priesthood of

believers, with a voice in shaping the church's mission and vision through the Holy Spirit's guidance. Membership also reflects your commitment to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, in obedience to God's commands, and a belief in Scripture as the ultimate authority on truth. Finally, being a member means you are willing to use your spiritual gifts to strengthen and encourage one another in the faith, as you answer God's call to serve His people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, just as the day of Pentecost marked the birth of the early church, filled with the Holy Spirit and united in purpose, we too are called to come together as one body in Christ. The church, though made up of many different parts, is united by one Spirit, one faith, and one Lord. Church membership reflects this unity, where we commit to serving one another, building each other up, and using our gifts to glorify God. Despite the imperfections we may encounter in the church, it remains the bride of Christ, and as such, we are called to plant ourselves in a local body, growing together in faith and love. Membership is not just about attending; it's about fully engaging in the mission of the church, submitting to Christ's headship, and participating in the ordinances He has commanded. May we each embrace our role within this spiritual family, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit to lead us as we seek to glorify God and serve His people.