

Prep notes for Branches class 3/24/24

The privileges and responsibilities of church membership

Final Outline

- Section 1: Local Church Membership (5-7 minutes)
  - Start with what is the church: Those who profess Christ as Lord and Savior
    - Circles: Visible vs. Invisible
    - Universal vs. local - Is there such a thing as local church?
  - What verses talk about church membership
    - Trick - none, but point to where it is implied
    - Submit to elders/leadership [Heb. 13:17] - how do you submit unless you are committed to that leadership? Be of 1 mind (how to do that without hard work (1st Cor 1:10)
    - Paul wrote to specific churches (1st Cor 1:2), Christ spoke to specific churches in Revelation 1:11
    - They were keeping roles in the New Testament: (Acts 2:41)
  - Define Local Church: A local church is born-again, Spirit-filled people who gather regularly in the name of the Lord Jesus and under the authority of God's Word to profess the true gospel and affirm each other's citizenship in the kingdom of God by the ordinances.
    - Not your bowling league membership!
    - Make visible your commitment to Christ and His people
    - Raise the flag of faith
    - It is true you are part of the invisible universal church, but God expects you to live out your faith in the visible, local church
    - Church is like an embassy behind enemy lines - church **members represent Christ to the world**. If you want to see who/what Christ is, the Church can point to a member and say "Here is a representative of Christ, talk with him/her"
- Transition: There are Privileges and Responsibilities of being a member
  - Point out Drew and Don/Dr. Friday
    - If both come weekly to church and Sunday school, but 1 is a member, and the other is not, what privileges/responsibilities does one have that the other doesn't
  - These gifts are special - weapons and garments given by our Lord! (**Chronicles of Narnia gifts** - Lucy healing ointment, Susan- bow/arrow, Peter/Edmund swords
  - Can't make an exhaustive list. More you dig in Scripture, the more you will find. Like digging for gold, but we are in a **kid's toy sandbox where every scoop has some surprise and delight**
- Section 2: Privileges of Church Membership
  - Worship Liturgy is prepared for you by the leadership (Nehemiah 8:8)
    - Pastor Reeder died - many comments of sympathy to our church from guest preachers
    - Fostering corporate worship of the triune God
    - Administering sacraments/ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
  - Watchful Care/Shepherded by the elders
    - BCO 6-3: All baptized persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the church
    - Feed my sheep to Peter (John 21:17)

- The members are prayed for each session/diaconate meeting. Prayer/oversight even by individual shepherds
- Given direction by Church Leadership: **Acts 20:28**
  - Talk about the Andrew Project or the Spiritual Gifts
  - Help members determine their spiritual gifts
  - Lead and direct in missions - we just had Missions week
  - Determine where the funds of the church go
- Church discipline (yes, this is a benefit **Heb 12:11** **Gal 6:1** (also **Heb 12:6, 10**; **Matthew 18**)
  - 5 purposes of church discipline page 110
    - Expose sin (we are easily self-deceived and minimize sin)
    - Warn, give a taste of coming judgment if no repentance
    - Save from the path of death
    - Protect the healthy church members from a sinful member causing division
    - Present a good witness for Christ, keeps the church pure
  - Analogy of the kite - falls when restraints are cut
- Taught/Equipped **Eph 4:11-12**; **2nd Tim 3:16-17**;
  - Help to fight out false doctrine **Eph 4: 14-15**
- Assurance
  - Community with other believers that Jesus is Savior and Lord:
  - Affirmed by other church members and not going alone where you can get swayed in doubt
  - There is power when gathered: **1st Cor. 5:4** and page 44 in blue book
- Provided a community, bear one another's burdens (**Gal 6:2**)
  - Suffer with those who suffer and rejoice with those who rejoice (**1st Cor 12:25b-26**)
  - Metaphors
    - **Family** - relational intimacy and shared Identity
    - **Body**: mutually dependent but have different roles
    - **Temple** of the Spirit: God specially identifies himself and dwells with these people
    - **Vine**/branches: dependence on Jesus and his word
    - These different metaphors all are needed. Don't rely on just one. Just as I am described as many things: son, husband, father, friend. I am irreducibly all if these things and need all to describe me
    - All of the above metaphors get put into practice locally. Action.
  - Examples in our class:
    - Sandy Murphy on care team/organizing meal trains/helping women in crisis
    - Jan Rickets taking people to lunch
    - Carolyn Friday and the praying for our class, widow's ministry
- Section 3: Responsibilities of Church Membership
  - Must gather together (**Heb 10:25**) this is a command
    - Worship and outside of worship, engage in Baptism and the Lord's Supper
  - Submit to leadership

- (Heb 13:17, Heb 13:7, Acts 20:28, Titus 1:7, 1st Peter 5:2)
- As children submit to parents (Not as final word of truth, but as God given authority)
- Submit your presence and discipleship to the church's love and oversight
- Submit to church discipline
- Follow the vision your leaders have set unless unbiblical
- Elect Officers
  - Research and vote for your leadership
  - (congregations role in making decisions in Acts 14:23, Acts chapter 6:2-3, 5). Should also honor your pastors (1st Tim 5:17) and pay them (1st Tim 5:18). Confront/bring charges against a disqualified elder (1st Tim 5:19-20)
- Pray for your church
  - Pray for Paul in Ephesians 6:19
  - Committed to praying for church leadership and preaching of the Word during the PIC
  - Do you pray for our church?
- Affirm and oversee others
  - The member becomes part of the embassy itself
  - When children are baptized we vote (say "I do" when asked) to help raise them. The nursery opportunity should be exciting!
  - Titus 2: Should mentor others (Raiders volunteering? College/High school student mentoring?)
  - Do you encourage others in their faith?
  - Life-on-Life: Physically (live near church to be involved); Vocationally (put church needs above your own career)
- Use whatever gift you have to serve others
  - (1st Peter 4:10)
  - Even non-spiritual gifts: Serving church even in dirty tasks but also in hobbies/skills you have (people in our class who are skilled in fixing cars - offer to work together to help with a member's car!)
  - Serve the church in the little things:
    - mention the custodian who said "I don't know about that, but that group puts away the chairs"
- Financially support your church Deut 26:12
  - God has uniquely put the Local church for where we tithe
  - Entrust the leadership to use wisely, but also be involved with where the money goes (join the missions team?)
- Must be unified/Love one another - (John 13:34-35), submit to one another (Phil 2:3-4). Not complaining (Phil 2:12-16)
  - Directly address disagreements and conflict with elders rather than gossip or leave disgruntled
  - Intentionally avoiding division (Rom 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11), idleness (2nd Thes 3:6; 11-12), heretical teaching (Titus 1:9-14; 2nd John 9-11)
  - Speaking well of the church, not speaking poorly of our leaders to non-church members
- Conclusion: Challenge (3 minutes)
  - Look over this list: beautiful promises! Noble responsibilities!
  - Are you actively enjoying/pursuing these things?

- Wait, maybe say this is a grand list - but I do not EXPERIENCE this in my church situation (don't feel at home, feel shepherded, feel connected)
  - It is easy to submit to a picture-perfect idea (knight saving damsel in distress)
  - But church is literally referred to as a harlot (Hosea) - we are ugly, sometimes not the most desirable to submit
- Answer
  - Church is a work on progress - being transformed into Christ (2nd Cor 3:18)
  - Love as Christ loved, even ugly (John 13:34)
  - Go to your shepherds with your concerns
  - Pray for the church
  - Maybe you are here for "such a time as this" to help motivate the change? (Esther 4:14)
- Being a member is an active thing - we live in a consumer society, but the Church needs to be different. If you are not active in the church, you are missing out on your privileges and responsibilities
  - You have been entrusted with this church - show Christ at the end that we have been faithful stewards to present his Bride as pure and ready for marriage feast
- Direct opportunities: Nursery, Small groups are in the works, Welcome Team - find a spot to use your gifts - your duty!

#### Rough Draft Outline

- Section 1: Local Church Membership (5-7 minutes)
  - Start with what is the church
    - Circles: World vs. those who profess Christ
      - Visible Church vs. Invisible Church
    - Universal vs. local
  - Then ask question of what verses talk about church membership
    - Trick - none, but point to where it is implied
    - Submit to elders/leadership - who do you submit unless you are committed to that leadership?
    - Paul wrote to specific churches (1st Cor 1:2), Christ spoke to specific churches in Revelation
    - They were keeping roles in the New Testament: (Acts 2:41)
  - Define Local Church: A local church is born-again, Spirit-filled people who gather regularly in the name of the Lord Jesus and under the authority of God's Word to profess the true gospel and affirm each other's **citizenship** in the kingdom of God by the ordinances.
    - You make visible your commitment to Christ and His people
    - Raise the flag of faith
    - It is true you are part of the invisible universal church, but God expects you to live out your faith in the visible, local church
    - Church is like an embassy behind enemy lines - church members represent Christ to the world around us. If you want to see who/what Christ is, the Church can point to a member and say "Here is a representative of Christ, talk with him/her"
- Transition: There are privileges and Responsibilities of being a member
  - Point out Drew and Don/Dr. Friday

- If both come weekly to church and Sunday school, but 1 is a member, and the other is not, what privileges/responsibilities does one have that the other doesn't
- ~~Split into groups – 4 groups listing out as many privileges/responsibilities you can think of, 5 minutes~~
  - Can't make an exhaustive list. More you dig in Scripture, the more you will find. Like digging for gold, but we are in a kid's toy sandbox where every scoop has some surprise and delight
- Section 2: Privileges of Church Membership (14 minutes)
  - Worship Liturgy is prepared for you by the leadership (Nehemiah 8:8)
    - Fostering corporate worship of the triune God
    - Administering sacraments/ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
  - Watchful Care/Shepherded by the elders
    - BCO 6-3: All baptized persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the church
    - Feed my sheep to Peter (John 21:17)
    - The members are prayed for each session/diaconate meeting. Prayer/oversight even by individual shepherds
  - Given direction by Church Leadership:
    - Talk about the Andrew Project or the Spiritual Gifts
    - Help members determine their spiritual gifts
    - Lead and direct in missions - we just had Missions week
    - Determine where the funds of the church go
  - Church discipline (yes, this is a benefit Heb 12:6, 10, 11; Matthew 18)
    - 5 purposes of church discipline page 110
      - Expose sin (we are easily self-deceived and minimize sin)
      - Warn, give a taste of coming judgment if no repentance
      - Save from the path of death
      - Protect the healthy church members from a sinful member causing division
      - Present a good witness for Christ, keeps the church pure
  - Taught/Equipped
    - Help to fight out false doctrine
  - Assurance
    - Community with other believers that Jesus is Savior and Lord:
    - Affirmed by other church members and not going alone where you can get swayed in doubt
    - There is power when gathered: 1st Cor. 5:4 and page 44 in blue book
    - The church empowers members to grab hold of the wonders of the new covenant and put them into practice on earth (body, bride, temple, family). We fit together as a group and can do more than individuals
  - Provided a community, bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)
    - weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (1st Cor 25b-26)
    - Examples in our class:
      - Sandy Murphy on care team/organizing meal trains/helping women in crisis
      - Jan Rickets taking people to lunch

- Carolyn Friday and the widow's ministry
- Metaphors
  - Family - relational intimacy and shared Identity
  - Body: mutually dependent but have different roles
  - Temple of the Spirit: God specially identifies himself and dwells with these people
  - Vine/branches: dependence on Jesus and his word
  - These different metaphors all are needed. Don't rely on just one. Just as I am described as many things: son, husband, father, friend. I am irreducibly all if these things and need all to describe me
  - All of the above metaphors get put into practice locally. Action.
- Section 3: Responsibilities of Church Membership (16 minutes)
  - Must gather together (Heb 10:25) this is a command
    - Worship and outside of worship, engage in Baptism and the Lord's Supper
  - Submit to leadership
    - (Heb 13:17, Heb 13:7, Acts 20:28, Titus 1:7, 1st Peter 5:2)
    - Submit your presence and discipleship to the church's love and oversight
    - Submit to church discipline
    - Follow the vision your leaders have set unless unbiblical
  - Research and vote for your leadership
    - (congregations role in making decisions in Acts 14:23, Acts chapter 6:2-3, 5). Should also honor your pastors (1st Tim 5:17) and pay them (1st Tim 5:18). Confront/bring charges against a disqualified elder (1st Tim 5:19)
  - Pray for your church
    - Pray for Paul in Ephesians 6
    - Committed to praying for church leadership and preaching of the Word during the PIC
  - Affirm and oversee others
    - The member becomes part of the embassy itself
    - When children are baptized we vote (say "I do" when asked) to help raise them. The nursery opportunity should be exciting!
    - Titus 2: Should mentor others
    - Bearing one another's burdens
    - Physically: regularly coming together (Heb 10:25, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 20:7, 1st Cor 16:2), he claims should try to live geographically close to your church so easier to serve others in the body
  - Use whatever gift you have to serve others
    - (1st Peter 4:10)
    - Even non-spiritual gifts: Serving church even in dirty tasks but also in hobbies/skills you have (people in our class who are skilled in fixing cars - offer to work together to help with a member's car!)
  - Financially support your church
  - Must be unified/Love one another - (John 13:34-35), submit to one another (Phil 2:3-4). Not complaining (Phil 2:12-16)

- Directly address disagreements and conflict with elders rather than gossip or leave disgruntled
  - Intentionally avoiding division (Rom 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11), idleness (2nd Thes 3:6; 11-12), heretical teaching (Titus 1:9-14; 2nd John 9-11)
  - Speaking well of the church, not speaking poorly of our leaders to non-church members
- Conclusion: Challenge (3 minutes)
  - Look over this list - are you actively pursuing these things
  - Being a member is an active thing - we live in a consumer society, but the Church needs to be different. If you are not active in the church, you are missing out on your duty
  - Direct opportunities: Nursery, leading some initiatives in Branches
    - Somewhere mention the custodian who said "I don't know about that, but that group puts away the chairs"
- Which verse in the Bible talks about church membership. Trick, there isn't a verse. Need to define what we mean by membership (books example of not calling a nation's citizens members, sounds weird)
  - Not voluntary, you are commanded to be a part of the body. God provides the local church as the way to do this
  - Acts in the early chapters keeps reporting the numbers in the church at that time, so someone is keeping track of numbers
  - The "church in Corinth" sends support to the church at Jerusalem. These were separate groups. #3 on page 43 of the blue book
  - Excommunication: you can't remove something unless it is already a part of something. This also argues the early church has membership roles 1st Cor. 5:13
  - When you are adopted, you find yourself at dinner table with brothers/sisters, may squabble, but they are your family. You don't just "choose" whether to join a family. You are adopted in
- But we can start with the BCO from chapter 4 (? Or 6)
  - BCO 5-9: Do you, in reliance on God for strength, solemnly promise and covenant that you will walk together as a particular church, on the principles of the faith and order of the Presbyterian Church in America, and that you will be zealous and faithful in maintaining the purity and peace of the whole body?
  - BCO 6-2: Communing members are those who have made a profession of faith in Christ, have been baptized, and have been admitted by the Session to the Lord's Table
  - BCO 6-3: All baptized persons are entitled to the watchful care, instruction and government of the church, even though they are adults and have made no profession of their faith in Christ

Notes from Church Membership book by Leeman

Church membership can be confusing, indicates like a club, but see embassy section below

What the church is not: a voluntary social club

We are not consumers. A church service is our service of worship to the Lord, not the church providing a service to us

The church is an embassy where we are called to take refuge in a foreign land

A church member is a person who has been officially and publicly recognized as a Christian before the nations, as well as someone who shares in the same authority of officially affirming and overseeing other Christians in his or her church.

A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ's name to officially affirm and oversee one another's membership in Jesus Christ and his kingdom through gospel, preaching and gospel ordinances

Submit in these ways per the Blue book:

- Publicly: officially join the church, commit to the local body
- Physically: regularly coming together (Heb 10:25, Acts 2:42-47, Acts 20:7, 1st Cor 16:2), he claims should try to live geographically close to your church so easier to serve others in the body
- Socially: deep friendships should form within the church. You become like your close friends, so have those friends be in your church as you all seek to be like Christ. (James 4:4, 1st Cor 15:33). Even consider friendships with those who have different backgrounds or interests. Humility like Christ who did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped
- Affectionately: weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice (1st Cor 12:25b-26). Read middle paragraph on page 99
- Financially: see verses on page 100
- Vocationally: understanding the eternal connection to the church is more important than your jobs. May need to turn down a promotion if it will hinder some of your work at the church
- Ethically: tell the story of the kite and children. In same way children submit to parents, so we should submit to the church. Church is not final authority just as parents are not, but placed there by God (Gal 6:1, Jude 23, matt 18:16-17)
- Spiritually: 1st Cor 12:7, Jude 20-21, eph 4:11-32, Heb 10:25). These are the people we primarily focus our spiritual gifts and prayers
- Often means submitting to ugly fellow sinners. But we are to love as Christ loved, even the ugly (John 13:34). Put a verse that Christ is transforming the ugly into something beautiful

Like the "I do" of a marriage vow, the church membership vow is about the church taking specific responsibility for you and you for a church

This is the institutional view but there is an organic view. The rules of an institution don't only constrain but also commission and empower. They build a platform for activity

If person claims to be righteous, but doesn't pressure righteousness, we would urge to repent. Similarly, if person claims to be part of church universal, but does not join a local body, we would say they are self-deceived and should repent

Christ's universal body will gather at the end of time, but you can find imperfect expressions, outposts, embassies of that gathering right now in the local church

Standards of church membership:

- Must be a Christian. The church affirms the profession of faith
- Now proclaim to the nations "you may now look to this person to know what Jesus is like. This person is an official Jesus representative"

Rulers should rule with righteousness: 2nd Sam 23:3-4

Notes from The Gospel Coalition [The Membership of the Church](#)

- We are in a time when some churches are discounting the need for church membership, and some are re-emphasizing it.
- Difference between universal church and local church
  - Universal church entry requirements: be a part of the group whom Christ died for and gave His life to redeem. confess the name of Jesus as Lord
    - Ephesians 5:25-27
    - Revelation 19:7-8
    - A great number of members, both in heaven and on earth - a great multitude talked about in Revelation 19:6

- Local church
  - 1st Cor 1:2: specifically to the church at Corinth
  - Limited number of members
  - Entry requirements:
    - Some had state-churches - if you were a member of the state, you were automatically a member of the Roman Catholic church
    - Baptism is required for membership
- Responsibilities and privileges
  - In some churches, structured according to a church covenant
    - Usually involve 2 groups
      - Leaders
      - Members
    - Leaders commit to engage in the following:
      - Fostering corporate worship of the triune God
      - Preaching and Teaching the Word of God
      - Administering sacraments/ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
      - Praying for church members
      - Leading in accordance with the will of the Lord
      - Shepherding them through protection from false doctrines and practices
      - Providing examples (even though flawed by sin) of Christlikeness
      - Employing members and their gifts for the growth of the church
      - Maintaining unity
      - Prompting members toward greater purity
      - Marshaling members for missional endeavors
      - Providing pastoral care
      - Stewarding wisely the members' sacrificial giving
    - Members:
      - Engaging together in worship of the triune God
      - Responding in faith and obedience to the Word of God
      - Being baptized and celebrating the Lord's Supper
      - Praying for church concerns and ministries
      - Submitting to leaders and their wise guidance
      - Directly addressing disagreement and conflict with the leaders (rather than gossiping about them or disgruntledly leaving the church)
      - Submitting to church discipline
      - Following the pattern of faithfulness and obedience set for them by leaders
      - Employing their gifts for the health and growth of the church
      - Maintaining unity and pursuing purity
      - Engaging in missional endeavors
      - Responding to pastoral care
      - Giving sacrificially

- Intentionally avoiding division (Rom 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11), idleness (2nd Thes 3:6; 11-12), heretical teaching (Titus 1:9-14; 2nd John 9-11)

Notes from Kevin Deyoung's TGC article [6 Reasons why membership matters](#)

- When you join a church, you make visible your commitment to Christ and His people
  - Raise the flag of faith
  - It is true you are part of the invisible universal church, but God expects you to live out your faith in the visible, local church
  - Most of Paul's letters were written to a local church body, not an individual. So did Jesus in Revelation
- Making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture
  - "I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get."
- Fights over-independence: it shows that we are humbly joining to be a part of a body, not just loners
- Provides accountability
- Joining a church allows your pastors and elders to be more faithful shepherds
  - Can follow up on those who do not show up for several weeks
  - Know whom to pray for
- Joining the church gives you an opportunity to make promises/have responsibilities:
  - promises to pray, give, serve, attend worship, accept the spiritual guidance of the church, obey its teachings, and seek the things that make for unity, purity, and peace.

Notes from [What are the Responsibilities of Church Membership?](#) From the 9marks website

- A local church is born-again, Spirit-filled people who gather regularly in the name of the Lord Jesus and under the authority of God's Word to profess the true gospel and affirm each other's **citizenship** in the kingdom of God by the ordinances.
  - The church has a unique identity: made up of regenerate, Spirit-filled people (Jer. 33:31-34; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 1:7, 13, 22; Rom. 8:15)
  - The church has a unique authority
- Local churches are embassies of God's kingdom.
  - Through baptism, the Lord's Supper, and discipline, a local church wields the authority to affirm or denounce someone's **citizenship** in God's kingdom.
- 6 Responsibilities of church membership:
  - Assemble Together (Heb. 10:25)
  - Protect the Gospel (Paul chastised the church members, not just the leadership, for turning to a "different gospel" (Gal 1:2, 6) and allowing error to creep in (Gal 1:7).
    - Members need to be able to discern true and false doctrine: (Eph. 4:13-14; Phil. 1:9-10; 1 Jn. 4:1-6)
    - Need to have private Bible study so can discern these things
  - Define your church's membership: Accept and dismiss members
    - "this person is a citizen of God's kingdom" (cf. Matt 16:18-19; 18:17-20; 28:18-20).
  - Love One Another: John 13:35; 1st John 4:7

- take prayer seriously (1 Thess. 5:16; Eph. 6:18), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), show hospitality (Rom. 12:13), put others' interests ahead of our own (Phil. 2:4), and seek to develop meaningful relationships.
- Submit to your elders
  - Hebrews 13:17
- Evangelize the Lost
  - Jesus has commissioned every church member to "make disciples" (Matt. 28:18–20).

Desiring God article [The Meaning of Membership and Church Accountability](#)

- Benefits: the local church has elders or overseers who have special responsibility to equip (Ephesians 4:11) and care for (Acts 20:28) and teach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) the members.
- Responsibilities: members are to respect (1 Thessalonians 5:12f.) and be submissive to (Hebrews 13:17) these leaders, but not to treat them as infallible (1 Timothy 5:20) or in the place of Christ (Matthew 23:8-12).