



DISCIPLESCHURCH

Membership Class

Session 5

Membership Priorities - Part 1

Glorifying God Through Lives Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

SESSION 5: Membership Priorities - Part 1

I. What is “Covenant Membership”?

WHAT COVENANT MEMBERSHIP ISN'T:

- A vow of “till death do us part” (There are biblical reasons to leave a church)
- A membership card to an institution or organization
- A business contract

WHAT COVENANT MEMBERSHIP IS:

- A promise made to one another for as long of a season as God has you here in this city while this church is operating in a biblical manner
- A commitment to playing your part in building up a community of people
- An understanding of what is expected from each member and what is expected from the leadership of Disciples Church
- A willing participation in the great mission God has given us

WHY WE PRACTICE COVENANT MEMBERSHIP:

We practice Covenant Membership because Jesus calls the saved to be one in unity, and the biblical expression of this geographically is in the local church. It can be seen clearly in Scripture that there is an expectation of being committed to and belonging to one another as a congregation of believers under the shepherding of qualified pastors/elders; in this, there can be biblical unity.

1 Corinthians 12:14–20 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

9Marks, a ministry devoted to equipping church leaders, says it well:

... church membership is a formal relationship between a local church and a Christian characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.

Membership recognizes and responds to the call of discipleship in the context of gospel-centered community. It is an affirmation and agreement to contribute to the good of the body rather than simply taking from it. It is what we see in Scripture, namely, local groups of professing believers living under the authority of God's word and the shepherding of qualified elders. It is an obligation to sacrificially seek the good of others in the body of Christ by taking the general call toward service and putting it to practice within a particular people. It is a blessing to each of us, because our ongoing sin is very real, and God gifts His people with the love and accountability of the local church to spur ongoing repentance and growth in personal Christ-likeness.

At Disciples Church, the current process for becoming a member involves classes and assignments, a meeting with the elders, and agreeing to the membership covenant. Far from mere formality, these expressions are important representations of the formal commitment.

II. The Five Priorities of Covenant Membership

THE FIVE PRIORITIES OF DISCIPLES CHURCH COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

Testimony | Worship | Service | Accountability | Discipleship

TESTIMONY

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

1. SHARE YOUR STORY

- The story of how you were saved
- Ongoing testimony of how God has worked and still is working in your life

2. BE BAPTIZED AS A BELIEVER

What is believer's baptism?

- A public testimony to God, the church, yourself, and the world of your faith in Christ
- A visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ through the gospel, and the power of the gospel to transform a person's life

Romans 6:1-5 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- Baptism is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus and in no way contributes to one's salvation. Baptism is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of His death and resurrection. The new believer is symbolically buried in the waters of baptism as they are fully submersed and raised to new life as they come out of the water.

Glorifying God Through Lives Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

- Baptism is *not* a cleansing ritual that needs to be repeated, but a one-time demonstration that you have been forever cleansed of the stain of sin by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Who should be baptized?

- All who have put their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for their salvation

Acts 2:41 (NASB) So then, those who had received his word were baptized ...

- Baptism is *not* for anyone who has yet to repent and place his or her faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for his/her salvation. A personal proclamation of saving faith in Christ Jesus alone is the requirement found in Scripture.

Why should someone be baptized?

Our highest aim in baptism is to glorify God and tell the world what He has done in our lives.

- In baptism, God is glorified by our public testimony of His saving grace and work in our life.
- In baptism, God is glorified because we are being obedient to Christ's instruction to do it.

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

How does Disciples Church baptize people?

- Disciples Church desires to baptize those giving a credible profession of faith as often as possible. Practically, this normally happens four times a year at our all church celebrations; however, we'll have baptisms whenever a fruitful opportunity exists.
- Personal discussions about saving faith and baptism happen between anyone wanting to be baptized and pastors or other leaders. At times, orientation classes are provided to have these conversations and answer any questions about baptism.¹

¹ Baptism is something that should be understood and cherished. At Disciples Church, we treat the baptism of children with special care and want to help parents walk with their children through the baptism process. If you have a minor who is expressing interest in baptism, a special setting is provided to affirm the understanding and readiness of your child. This special session with one of our leaders is for the baptism candidate and parent(s). During this session, we will talk about saving faith, the meaning of baptism, as well as the right and wrong motivations for being baptized. This is an opportunity for the child to share his/her story and for an elder or a member of the staff to talk with the parents and the child in order to discern the child's readiness for baptism. The elders and/or staff members will either recommend the child for baptism or encourage him/her to wait for a later season. *Parents will be asked to honor the recommendation of the church leadership.*

3. PARTICIPATE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is the Lord's Supper?

- The Lord's Supper is a holy, New Covenant ordinance from our Lord Jesus, whereby professing and accountable believers gather together regularly to remember, celebrate, and testify of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ by consuming the elements which represent His body and blood.
This is a regular practice and testimony for those who are saved by God.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Who should celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- Only those who have placed their faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for their salvation

Why should someone participate in the Lord's Supper?

- It is a unifying reminder of the centrality and supremacy of Jesus in our faith.
- The Bible commands the Church to celebrate the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns (see 1 Corinthians 11:26 above).
- It is a regularly practiced, symbolic statement of your faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.

How does Disciples Church celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- Disciples Church observes this ordinance generally twice a month on Sunday mornings during our worship services and at various other corporate gatherings.

WORSHIP

“Worship is never a step on our way up to any other experience. It is not a door through which we pass to get anywhere. It is the end point, the goal.”

-John Piper

Psalm 96:6-8 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the LORD, O families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts!

1. PARTICIPATE IN CORPORATE WORSHIP GATHERINGS

- Sunday worship is the “first fruits” of our week. God’s word makes clear the high importance and blessing it is to gather as a local church consistently.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- Sunday worship is a way to prioritize time to learn from your shepherds.²
- Your participation is not *just* about what you get out of it but is also about what you bring to it. Each person’s presence and participation cannot be underestimated.

2. COMMIT TO DAILY WORSHIP

- Jesus left us an example of the critical nature of daily worship.

Luke 5:16 (NIV) But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

- Daily worship is the “first fruits” of our day.
- Personal Bible study and prayer is essential to your growth in Christ.
- Daily worship is essential for families who are trying to grow in Christ.
 - Family worship can involve several things (prayer, devotional time, spiritual conversations, singing, missional opportunities, etc.).

² As a reminder, when you need to miss a Sunday, the sermon is available via our podcast or at www.discipleschurch.com.

3. PARTICIPATE IN FINANCIAL WORSHIP

- Financial worship is the joyful, regular, generous, and proportional giving of the “first fruits” of your income to your home church ministry.
- Your money follows your heart! Your prioritized spending goes to what you worship and what you love the most.
- Giving financially to the ministry is modeled in Scripture as giving honor rightly.

The open-handed life: How do we steward our money and stuff well?

A. Joyfully

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

B. Regularly

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

C. Generously

2 Corinthians 8:2-3 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord

D. Proportionately

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.