

Rediscover CHURCH

Why the Body of Christ Is Essential



CHAPTER 5

Is Joining Actually Necessary?

LEADERS ASK: What are some things in our lives that we have to be members to belong? *Possible Answers: Gym, Library, Social Club, Rewards Programs, etc.*

LEADERS ASK:

- What makes you a member of these organizations or programs? *You pay a fee and receive some sort of benefit(s) from the organization or program.*
- In most cases, for most clubs, what else are you asked to DO to remain a member? *It really comes down to just paying a fee or membership due doesn't it?!*
- What do you say to a person who says: Church membership isn't necessary.

LEADERS EXPLAIN

- Biblical church membership is necessary because of these areas: Conversion; Authority; Separation; Discipleship
- We already talked about in chapter 2 of conversion and how it is a biblical necessity to be a member of the local church. If we are NOT a Christian we cannot belong to a church that's purpose is to look like heaven while maintaining authority and discipleship over one another.

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Let's look together at the 2nd characteristic of biblical membership:

Authority

LEADERS HAVE SOMEONE READ: MATTHEW 16:13-20; 18:15-20

EXPLAIN: There are 2 types of "keys of authority" to notice in these verses.

- Jesus asks Peter, "who do they say I am?" and then after Peter answers Jesus, Jesus asks, "but Peter, who do you say that I am?"
 - Jesus affirms Peter's answer and then responds that He will build HIS church on them (Christians) and gives them the keys to the kingdom - in other words, Jesus made churches the embassy of heaven here on earth.
 - Leeman says, "Think of the keys as being like an embassy's authority to formally declare its home government's laws or decrees (72)."
- In chapter 18, Jesus uses the 2nd key of authority to tell the disciples that His church will have the authority to affirm true confessors of the gospel (72).
 - The story of going to the brother in Christ when they are living in sin and what the process should be to confront that person, shows us authority over our members by holding them accountable in whether they are walking and talking like true confessors of our faith.

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The authority of the keys = the right to declare on Jesus's behalf the **what** and the **who** of the gospel:
What is a right confession? Who is a true confessor?

So the church can tell us, as members:

- WHAT we are to believe or confess
 - For example: doctrine of scripture and songs; how to look at cultural issues biblically; what we should be teaching to others around us
- WHO is a true confessor
 - For example: who can be baptized; who can take the Lord's supper, who can teach, preach; who can be a deacon; and who should be IN the membership based on sin they might not be willing to confess and repent of.

LEADERS ASK: How does this "authority" make you feel as a believer? How do you think our culture responds to the church having this kind of authority?

- The reason the church has authority is so we have order and right obligation to who can take part in the ordinances and offices of the church - Jesus knew that very soon after His ascension some of these problems would be to rise.

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- This authority answers questions like:
 - Who can be baptized?
 - Who can take the Lord's supper?
 - Who can teach and preach?
 - How do we deal with unrepentant members?
 - Does the church affirm [*name your current cultural issue*]?
 - Why shouldn't we listen to [*famous pastor*]?

Separation

LEADERS ASK:

- How does church membership separate us? and should it?
- How does separation prove that membership is biblical and necessary?

EXPLAIN: There are many verses we could look at that talks about membership. Though the word *membership* like we think of it today is not in Scripture, basically everywhere in the NT where the word church is used it is implied membership.

The better biblical answer though, is for us to look at scripture as a whole and see what God does with HIS people!

- All through scripture God draws a line around His people
 - The garden of Eden had an inside and out
 - The ark had an inside and out
 - The people of Israel in Egypt, quarantined off in Goshen, had an inside and out
 - The Israelites in the wilderness had cleanliness laws in order to establish an inside and out
 - The promised land had an inside and out

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LEADERS READ: "God's has always marked off his people so that he might put them on display for his own glory. He wants these embassies to stand out. It's no wonder Paul says do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (80)."

- A church must be **CLEAR** about who belongs to it and who doesn't precisely for the sake of the church's witness (81).

Discipleship

LEADERS ASK: How is church membership responsible for discipleship?

Membership in a church isn't just a status!

LEADERS ASK: What is one way that church membership is different than the other memberships we asked about earlier in the discussion?

Answer: Church membership isn't a one way service - you don't just pay for membership and receive benefits. Church membership is a job (81)!

But where does this job come from? EXPLAIN

- God's gave 2 commands to Adam in the garden
 - Be a King: be fruitful and multiply, ruling over the earth (Gen. 1)
 - Be a Priest: work and keep the garden (Gen. 2)

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- Adam was king by expanding his heirs, his kingdom and ruling over it all.
- Adam was a priest because he was to work what was already there keeping it a place where God dwelled holy.

LEADERS MAKE THIS POINT: Throughout all of Scripture God purposed for people to be Priest-Kings and through all of scripture they failed. Christ came as the perfect Priest-King and assigned the job to us through the holy spirit living in us!

Our kingly job as members: make disciples, enlarging the kingdom

Our priestly job as members: maintain our holiness by guarding the what/who of the gospel, protecting the kingdom

The POINT: "Church membership is not a passive thing. It's not just a status. It's not like membership in other clubs. It's a job where you go to work. You need to get job training. You need to engage it with your mind and heart. You need to think about making an impact. What are you going to produce this week? Are you benefitting the whole team and carrying your weight or are you slacking off?" (83)

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LEADERS EXPLAIN: If we are going to be responsible for the what and the who of the gospel then we need to constantly be looking for ways to train our mind and hearts on HOW to know how to protect and expand the gospel.

LEADERS ASK: What are some topics that we should be training ourselves to know how to navigate through as Priest-Kings?

Possible answers:

- What is currently threatening the gospel in our church and family life?
- Do I know the basic foundations of Christianity? Trinity, sin, and the end times (not in depth theological arguments but basic biblical truths - i.e. Who makes up the trinity? Is Jesus the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit God the Father?)
- How do I engage in political issues biblically?
- Can you tell the difference in a church member who stumbles in sin and one who pursues sin?
- Are you investing in the life of other church members in ways outside of saying "Hi" on a Sunday morning?
- Do you allow your schedule to be inconvenienced by church members?

These are all questions we can use to gauge the maturity of our own discipleship and our discipleship to other members inside of the membership!

LEADERS SAY: A good answer to another Christian who says that membership is not required or necessary is this: Think of the one person that you know that walks closer to Christ than anyone else you know - are they the type of Christian who seems to be apathetic to their local church - both attending and serving?

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A segment of a membership interview the the author, Jonathan Leeman uses: "Friend by joining this church, you will become jointly responsible for whether or not this congregation continues to faithfully proclaim the gospel. That means you will become joiintly responsible both for what this church teaches and for whether or not its members' lives remain faithful. And one day, you will stand before God and give an account for how you fulfilled this responsibility. We need more hands for the harvest, so we hope you join us in that work (84)!"