

What Are the Standards of Church Membership?

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[0 : 00] Music. We've been going through this study about the purpose of church membership.

! If you recall, we looked at Scripture to see that, yes, church membership is biblical.

Now, this Sunday, we're going to go back to Scripture to look at, well, what are the standards that Scripture says for church membership? And so I'm going to be using many different Scriptures today, but if you want to turn in your Bible to begin with in Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 36 and going to verse 41, I want us to read that text together.

I'm going to eventually come back to it later on in the sermon. But just as a way to begin, we're going to read Acts chapter 2, verse 36 through 41 as we honor the reading of God's Word together. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

[1 : 22] Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about 3,000 souls. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. I remember the first club that I belonged to, really the first club that I actually helped form, was a group of boys in the third grade called the Wrong Brothers.

The Wrong Brothers. And how the Wrong Brothers came to be was from a joke I told one of my friends in a school bus on the way to a field trip, and the joke was, if two wrongs don't make a right, what do two rights make?

An airplane. The Wright Brothers. You know, everybody, is this thing on? I think we had just talked about the Wright Brothers and how they had made an airplane, and so that was a really funny, that was my go-to joke back in the day.

[3 : 03] But my friend said, well, instead of being the Wright Brothers, let's be the Wrong Brothers. I said, okay, and so we referred to ourselves that whole day as being the Wrong Brothers, and of course other boys wanted to be a Wrong Brother too, and so we established some standards.

What it took to be a Wrong Brother, you had to be cool or popular in our eyes, and maybe even a little bad in order to be a good fit for the Wrong Brothers.

And then acceptance into our group was contingent upon all the other members voting unanimously to bring a new Wrong Brother into the clan.

We do that, though, don't we? Typically, when membership is to join a group or whatever it may be, there's some kind of standards in place.

So, for example, when you look at most country clubs, there's an economic standard typically. The dues are monthly, and you've got to be able to pay them on time, and so usually a lot of people aren't able to join a club like that if they aren't able to meet the economic standards.

[4 : 19] There's various different social clubs. A lot of them are looking for people who they view as being cool or trendy or popular. Sports teams, another group that has standards.

You've got to be athletic. You've got to have knowledge of the game. And then there's other groups like debate teams or chess clubs where you have to have the standard of intelligence.

You've got to have a certain IQ level in order to be a part of those groups. And participate in a way that is helpful for the rest. Even in charity groups, they're looking for people who are generous with

their time, generous with what they have, and are obviously generous towards others. And so, to be a member of something means that you are something or have something that others don't have.

Now, that thought can seem anti-Christian, can't it? Certainly, it would be wrong for us and sinful for us as a church to exclude people from our membership based upon their social or economic status.

[5 : 33] It would be sinful for us to exclude anyone because of their athletic ability, though we do have a church softball team. And we have been in the championship game the past two years.

Won it the year before, not last year, or two years ago. We didn't have it because of COVID. So, we are looking for athletes. But still, we aren't going to base your membership upon your athletic ability. And we're not going to let somebody in here who isn't a Christian just because they're a great athlete. And certainly, we're not going to base our membership upon a person's IQ.

We don't have those kinds of standards. But while we shouldn't establish standards like that, sometimes we do. Sometimes we do base standards on membership according to how the world puts standards in place for the different groups that they have and membership to them.

For example, you think about someone like the rich young ruler who Jesus encountered in Luke chapter 18, verses 18 through 30. He had all the appearances of an outward holiness.

[6 : 45] And with that, he also hit the trifecta of what a lot of churches might desire. Wealthy, he was youthful, and he was also influential.

And so, on top of that, he was also, it seemed, to be a man who had a great moral character. Someone who we would think, well, there's a guy who shares our religious views, maybe even our political views.

He seems like someone who would be a perfect fit for our church. But if you recall, Jesus eventually turns that man away. And what turns the man away is Jesus doing some work to show to him that the reality is, the truth is, is that his God is his wealth, is his things.

And he wasn't willing to part with those things to follow Christ. There is a danger for us to establish standards for membership based upon a person's external appearances only.

There is also a danger in thinking that we are more saved than someone else, or thinking that we are more worthy of the salvation that we've received than someone else.

[8 : 05] If you recall Jesus' parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector, also in Luke chapter 18. If you remember, the Pharisee thought that he was much better off than the tax collector.

In fact, he was comparing himself to the tax collector, saying, you know, I do all of these good things. I'm such a good person compared to this man who is unworthy. And if you remember, Jesus reveals in that parable that the truth was the Pharisee was the one who was not meeting the standards based upon his own self-righteousness.

It was the tax collector who acknowledged his sinfulness, who acknowledged his need for God to forgive him, who was repentant, and he was the one who left the temple justified.

So before moving on to look at the Bible's standards of church membership, let's confess that we are tempted and guilty at times of establishing standards for membership based on external appearances and also internal feelings that we sometimes can have of being superior, being more savable, being more worthy of the salvation that we have received.

And so our standards of church membership must match the standards that God has given for us to implement in his word. Not falling short of them, but also not exceeding them.

[9 : 33] And that's the main idea for this morning's sermon. The Bible has set standards. The Bible has set standards for church membership and explains how church membership begins and how it is affirmed.

And so this morning we looked to Scripture to identify what those standards are. But before doing so, I think it's important that we first understand whom the Lord has placed within his church to implement his standards for church membership.

Which brings me to my first point for this morning's sermon. The church and its elders are authorized by the Lord to implement his church membership standards.

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And so if you recall last week, we looked at the leadership structure that God has given to his church. And as a part of that leadership structure, a main part of that is that he has called his churches to have a plurality of elders.

[11 : 06] Look at 1 Peter 5, 1 through 2. Where there the apostle says, So I exhort the elders, writing to the church, I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the suffering of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly.

And so here we see, clearly from Scripture, a command from the Lord for elders to shepherd the flock. And part of shepherding the flock means guarding the entrance of the sheep gate, of the sheep pen.

Acts chapter 20, here we see this. As Paul is getting ready to depart, he calls the elders and he gives them this strong encouragement. Verse 17 sets it up and then we'll read verses 18 through 30 to see what his exhortation was to these elders.

In verse 17, Now from Miletus, he came to Ephesus and he called the elders of the church to come to him. Well, what did he say to them? Verse 28, there he encourages them, Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

So there you see, he's established, this is the established pattern that the Lord has for his church. The elders are to lead and they have an important role. In verse 29, he says, I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

[12 : 58] And from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them. So you see here, we have word from God that the elders are to serve as guards of the entrance to the sheep pen.

Now, we could think that this is an easy thing to be able to distinguish between who is the sheep and who is the wolf. Kind of like those old Looney Tunes cartoons where Wile E. Coyote, you know, puts on some kind of a covering where he looks like a sheep and the sheep are dumb enough not to realize it, but obviously the sheep guard is aware.

If it was that easy, I think anyone who is an elder would be willing, even more willing, to serve in that role. We would love it to be that easy. Unfortunately, that's not the case. And it hasn't been the case.

Even as we look back to Scripture, it's not easy. Satan is working and he works to deceive the church and he does so by sowing tares amongst the wheat.

And we have examples in Acts of men like Simon Magus who wanted to associate with the church and the apostles, but he wanted to buy the Holy Spirit so that he could use the Holy Spirit, he thought, for his trade in magic to be able to prosper himself.

[14 : 21] And obviously he was rejected for that. But there are others. Paul mentions in 2 Timothy how Phagellus and Hermogenes and Demas deserted him in the ministry, men whom he thought wants to be trustworthy.

John likewise speaks of those who once belonged to the church but who departed because he said they were not truly of us in 1 John 2 verse 19.

So it's possible, we see, to elude detection for a time, but eventually, as Scripture says, we will know them by their fruit.

And ultimately, we can be assured that the Lord knows those who are truly his and they will not escape judgment. those who truly are not of his flock.

However, we see that the elders stand guard. And so, when someone comes to our church and they would like to join, first they go through an interview process in which I seek to determine whether or not that person who wants to join our church is a Christian.

[15 : 32] And then upon that interview, I communicate that to the rest of our elders before we bring them before the church for recommendation for membership.

Because ultimately, we believe that it's finally the church's decision to accept a person into our membership. Why?

Because we believe that Jesus has given authority to his church. Matthew 16, 19 through 20, our Lord says, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

Now, speaking to his disciples, speaking in response to Peter's confession that Jesus was Lord and Savior, and he says to them, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. And so again, Jesus here told Peter and the twelve, and I believe by extension all other believers, that he is giving them authority to declare what is forbidden and what is permitted on the earth.

[16:40] Christians have such authority because they have the truth of God's authoritative word by which they are able to judge all things. If a person denies Christ, Christians can say to that person with absolute certainty, you are under God's judgment and condemned to hell for denying the only hope of salvation that you have.

Conversely, if a person is saved, has trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, Christians can say to that person with equal certainty, if what you confess is true, then your sins are forgiven, you are a child of God, and your eternal destiny is in heaven.

We can be sure that when believers agree with God's word, God agrees with them. Church membership begins when a local church affirms an individual Christian's profession of faith. Now again, we do our best to ensure that those who join understand the gospel having believed it. So, who meets the standards for membership?

Well, the simple answer to that question, who meets the standard for church membership? The simple answer is Christians. Christians. Our standards should not be any greater than that.

[18:19] But sometimes, again, if we're not careful, we can weigh down, especially new believers, with a heavy load. I've done this recently and been convicted of doing this with my own son.

Jack has been wanting to be baptized for a long time. And Danny and I, his mother, we're convinced that our son has been thankfully, prayerfully, saved by the Lord.

We've rejoiced in that. We've had conversations with him about the gospel. He's been able to articulate that well. We've noticed the difference within him, only being nine. But we believe that he has been saved and that he should be baptized.

Now, as a pastor, sometimes, it's, I hope, a lot of times, it's a blessing for a child to have their father be a pastor.

But sometimes, I think, unfortunately, we can be guilty of putting too heavy of a load on our own children. And maybe you do that, too. You don't have to be a pastor to do that. And so, I came to Jack. He wants to be baptized.

[19:21] And this is what I told him. I told him to get a journal. And I told him I wanted him to answer two questions. What does it, what does, what's the gospel? And actually, three questions.

What does it mean to be a Christian? And why do you want to be baptized? And I sent him away thinking, he's really going to think about this. He's really going to pray about this. And he's going to come back with pages in response.

And I'm just going to gush over it. Well, you know, he's nine. And he came back and he had answered the questions as best as he could. And he did answer them well. But it was clear to me that, you know what?

I am giving him standards that I don't give to other people. When somebody comes to me and they want to be baptized, I do have a conversation with them. I do ask them to see if they can articulate the gospel, if they know what it means to follow Christ.

And what I was doing to him was wrong because I was establishing higher standards for him than I had done for anybody else. And sometimes we can do that, can't we?

[20:23] And we've got to be careful that we don't. It's almost as if sometimes, and I think I was in that moment, we're communicating to people when we set higher standards than Scripture gives for us that we're doubting their salvation and that we're seeking for them to prove themselves to us.

And now I think it's good that a person comes here for a while and we get to know them and we're making sure that this is truly a sheep. But we shouldn't be always looking to doubt people's salvation, but to affirm it and to encourage what God has done in their lives.

When a church declares someone to be a part of its membership, what it is saying of that person is this, having been saved by Christ, this person is a Christian and we affirm with Scripture that they are officially a representative of Jesus Christ.

So Scripture authorizes the elders and the church to implement the standards established by God's Word for membership. But I still haven't addressed what specifically those standards are, though they've been touched on just a bit.

And so the second point, as we look at what these standards are, is to see this, understand this, church membership begins when a church affirms a person's profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

[21 : 49] Church membership begins when a person affirms a person's profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Church membership begins with the affirmation from the church of that person coming forward for membership their profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, just as Jesus did with Peter back in Matthew 16.

To facilitate this process, churches often use a statement of faith to ensure that everyone who joins the church is in agreement with what the church believes to be the truth.

faith. Our bylaws contain a statement of basic beliefs. If you don't have a hard copy of that, you can find that on our church website. If you'd like a hard copy of that, we can give that to you.

But hopefully, before you join our church, that is something that you've poured over and read over. And so we have statement of beliefs about the Bible, about the Trinity, about humanity, and about salvation.

And then also, along with that, we have five doctrinal statements that cover what we teach about God, what we teach about Scripture, what we teach about man, what we teach about salvation, and what we teach about the church.

[23 : 14] And those also can be found on our website as well. But these statements of faith are important because they separate us from other groups who claim Christ, who have their own statement of faith, but what they say about Christ is much different from what we say about Christ.

And what we say about Christ, we believe, is coming straight from God's Word. So, for example, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, some liberal Protestant churches, they confess a belief in Jesus, but many of them, most of them, don't believe that He is God.

Now, we differ greatly with them on that issue. We believe that He is God, that He's equal with God.

And so, we have statements about who Jesus is, but we have statements about what it is we believe, statements of faith so that those who join our church family understand this is what we believe and that this is what we expect in joining, that they believe as well.

And we do our part to ensure that they profess the same faith in Jesus Christ that we do as a church. Now, again, this was an issue that the early church faced with some denying the full humanity of Jesus.

And so, look at how the apostle John encouraged one church to be discriminating in who should be a member of the church. 1 John 4, 1 through 3, Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

[24 : 57] For many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this, you know the Spirit of God. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard was coming and is now in the world already.

And so, here we are some 2,000 years later and we still are encountering the same issues that the first church did. In fact, I believe that the issue of false teachers that we are encountering right now is even worse than what they were encountering back then.

And so, it's so important for us as a church that we clarify what it means to be a Christian because there's so much bad information out there. There's so much misinformation out there.

So many people are tuning in to TV shows and they're watching pastors and they think that they're getting the truth and unfortunately, a lot of times that's not the case.

[26 : 05] So, it's so important that we communicate and clarify what it means to be a Christian and we do that in one way through the statement of beliefs that we have as a church.

making sure that those who join with us in membership profess the same. While a statement though of beliefs affirms the essentials of what we believe and what we teach, I think a church covenant is also important.

A church covenant addresses what it means to be a church member. So, we have the statement of beliefs, this is what a Christian believes, but what does it mean to be a member of a church?

Not just that we believe the same things, but we understand and we affirm that with membership comes responsibilities that God has given us through His Word that we are to demonstrate towards one another, again, as Scripture has specified.

I almost think of it as a marriage. And you know how a marriage begins with a wedding. wedding. And a wedding is an elaborate ceremony.

[27 : 15] And we understand why. It's a huge day. It's a ginormous day for those who are coming together in the covenant of marriage. The bride and groom coming together and when they come

together at that ceremony, they are entering into a covenant with one another.

And so typically, in a Christian wedding, the bride and groom have gone through some kind of premarital counseling before they get to that day, before they get to that ceremony.

I know that's something that I require where through those counseling sessions, they are given information and instruction from God's Word about what it means to be a wife, what it means to be a husband, what it means to be married according to God's Word and in God's eyes.

And so, the efficient, I think also during that ceremony should communicate that, not just to the couple again, but also to everyone there. This is what marriage is, this is what marriage involves, this is how God sees marriage.

Reading Scripture to support that, giving a message to encourage that, that this is God's purpose for marriage, making that known to everyone who is there.

[28 : 37] And so, I think in a similar way, that's like our statement of beliefs as a church. We are saying, this is what God says a Christian should be, what a Christian should believe.

A true follower of Jesus Christ professes these things. And so, this is what a church says when those who come forward, or we collectively, profess what we believe.

in a wedding ceremony, after a word is given about the purpose of marriage, and the expectations that God has for each individual as they come together to become one, that they then exchange vows.

And as they're exchanging vows, they are making a covenant with one another, saying, I promise to be, I mean, basically, is what they're saying, is I promise to be all the things that God and His word has declared and commanded for me to be to you.

A church covenant in a similar way is the membership affirming to one another their profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and their promise to one another to be devoted to each other in all the ways that Scripture commands for them to be.

[30 : 05] Saying, in effect, I'm saved as you are. I believe as you believe. And I commit myself to all that God's word says that a church member should be.

and I make that declaration to God and to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ. And so, as we are considering a person for membership, as the elders meet with them, as the church affirms that person's profession of faith, we should tune our eyes and our ears to hear from that person as they've been a part of our fellowship expressions of their awareness of their sin, of their need for Christ and their desire to serve Him in His church, having been transformed by Him through their salvation in the Lord.

Third, church membership begins with repentance. It begins with repentance. Christianity doesn't only begin with faith and neither does church membership.

Repentance is present in the beginning of both. Mark 1, 14 through 15. There it says, now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God.

What was the gospel of God? What was He saying? What was He proclaiming? Well this, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel.

[31 : 45] when we are assessing the standards of church membership, we must keep in mind that we aren't looking for morally perfect people.

We aren't looking for morally perfect people. In fact, it's more of the opposite of that. We are looking for those who have been saved, who having been saved, realize their lack of moral perfection. who realize that they don't meet God's perfect standards. And so, they are aware of their need for Jesus Christ.

They're aware of the lack of their own righteousness, their need for God's righteousness, having repented of their sins, having acknowledged their need for Christ as their only hope for salvation. and then with that, pursuing Christ's likeness by following Him. In other words, it's not the people who never sin or say that they've never sinned that we are affirming as members of our church, but those who have acknowledged their sinfulness and who fight against sin in their life.

[33 : 01] We affirm not the self-righteous, but the unrighteous who thirst for Christ's righteousness, who being made alive in Christ, then seek to put the sins of the flesh to death.

What makes a prospective member of the church acceptable to a church is not their own moral purity, but Christ's.

Not what they have done to save themselves, but what Christ has done to save them. They must be able then to articulate the gospel, and if they've truly been saved, they'll be able to articulate the

gospel that has saved them.

I had a wonderful opportunity this past week to meet with Sherry Helm. Sherry came forward last Sunday with the others for membership, and in here again having explained how you become a member of our church, if you would like to do that, please reach out to me first and we'll set up that interview.

And I had a wonderful opportunity to be able to meet with Sherry this past week to interview her for membership. And as we talked, I mean, I heard all that, I heard the gospel.

[34 : 27] She was sharing, she was preaching the gospel to me of how she had been saved by the Lord. And I love doing those interviews because I get to hear what God has done in a person's life to save them, to bring them from spiritual death to spiritual life.

And it's always so powerful because usually in those meetings there's tears, there's an expression of remorse over sin. And in the same meeting and just a few minutes later, maybe in a few moments later, there's smiles and there's joy because they realize what Christ has done for them to save them and how unworthy they were of the salvation that they have received, expressing repentance.

This is who I once was and it pains me to know that I was far from God. But I rejoice in knowing that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior that He has willingly taken upon my sins.

He has died in my place. He has suffered and endured my shame that I'll have eternal life. So repentance is important as we look at the standards of church membership.

And then fourthly, church members should be baptized. Church members should be baptized. Now there is one matter that churches should require, I believe, of its members beyond being saved and that is baptism.

[36 : 00] And I'll tell you, I haven't always been in this boat. After all, I would think and many others do, the thief on the cross was saved. He wasn't baptized.

But if you think about it even more, he really didn't have the opportunity to be baptized, did he? He was kind of hanging on a cross and the Roman soldiers weren't going to let him down with Jesus to be able to baptize him in that moment.

If he could have been baptized physically, he would have been. Nevertheless, it is not essential for salvation. But here's how I came to shift my belief on this.

It came through, no surprise, through reading Scripture. The Bible says that one of the first steps in the Christian life is baptism.

Look at Acts 2, verse 36-39, the Scripture we read together before I began this sermon. Let's read it again. Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

[37 : 04] Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart. They were repentant. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brother, what shall we do? And Peter said to them, Repent, repent, and confess your sins and then what?

And be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and for your children and all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

Likewise, when we get to Matthew 28, verse 19, we see that baptism is the first thing that Jesus commands his disciples to do when they've made a disciple. Go therefore, Jesus says, and make disciples of all nations and baptize them, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

So again, while baptism does not save a person, it is Jesus' command and his means whereby that person whom he saved publicly identifies themselves with Christ and with his church.

Like communion, it's a way for his disciples to declare to the world their true citizenship, that they are a part of King Jesus' kingdom now.

[38 : 26] So while the Bible does not say you must be baptized before joining a church, it does say repent and be baptized.

If you want to identify yourself with Christ's people and if you expect them to identify with you, you need to first identify yourself with Jesus Christ, which takes place through baptism.

To refuse baptism would be unrepentant, wouldn't it? Why wouldn't you want to follow one of our Lord's first commands for you as a believer to be baptized and to identify with him?

I like what Mark Dever has said about baptism. He said, getting wet is the easiest commandment Jesus ever gave to follow. It only gets harder from there.

And so the Lord has given us his church to be a member of it, to be encouraged, to be convicted, to be equipped, to be given opportunity to serve and exercise the spiritual gifts that he has given us in service to one another as collectively we seek to advance the gospel together.

[39 : 54] And so why, if you have been saved, wouldn't you want to be a part of our Savior's church? Now maybe you're hearing this and you realize that you aren't saved.

Maybe you're a member of our church, maybe you're tuning in for whatever reason to our service and you're a member of another church but you realize that you truly haven't been saved. Or maybe you're listening and you know that you're not a member and that you're not saved.

I want to tell you that Jesus Christ, as he said, is the only way, the only truth, the only life. The Bible says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

We do not measure up to God's perfect standard. And so therefore God sent his son. He came, fully man, fully God.

He lived the perfect sinless life that we could never measure up to. He is the perfect standard and he could do it because he is God and he did it in human flesh.

[40 : 56] And he came and he did that and not only did he do that but he died on the cross as an atonement for our sins, for all the ways that we fail to measure up, for all the ways that we have sinned against our holy God and are condemned because of that.

And the condemnation is that because we've fallen short of God's glory, we are separated from him and we will be separated from him eternally in hell. But God has made a way by sending Jesus Christ his son who achieved that perfect standard and who willingly gave his life for ours, for yours. So that in believing in him, in confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have eternal life. Not because of what you've done but because of God's grace and what he has been willing to do for you.

You don't have to clean yourself up in order to come to church. You don't have to clean yourself up in order to come to God. You realize that you've sinned, you've repented, you turn to him in prayer. You confess that and you will go from spiritual death to spiritual life and we want to know that as well and we would love to celebrate that with you and to disciple you.

We'd love for you to become a member of our church, to be baptized and we continue to equip and serve you. Let's move to our application questions and again we won't be able to meet tonight to discuss these so I encourage you to talk with them in your home.

[42 : 30] Talk with them amongst your family. Just be in prayer over them and go through them yourself right now or come back to them later this week. First question of application.

What are the consequences if a church does not implement the Bible standards for church membership? What are the consequences? And there are consequences and they are great consequences that we certainly want to avoid.

I want you to think about that. What is the consequences if we fail to implement God's standards for our church? The second question.

What are the benefits when a church does implement the Bible standards for church membership? What are the benefits? And we can rejoice right now that the Lord is adding to our number that you know here obviously we can have that this week but you know week after week we've added new members to our congregation.

We've seen baptisms and that is reason to rejoice but we've got to be careful that we don't fall into just wanting to draw a crowd. Just anybody who wants to come forward we're willing to accept.

[43 : 34] We've still got to implement those standards and we have and the Lord is growing his church. We've got to continue to do that because there are great benefits for us as we do so.

Thirdly, what is the difference between someone who attends a church and someone who becomes a church member?

What's the difference between someone who attends a church and someone who becomes a church member? And there is a difference and I encourage you to go to God's word to see and to think about what are the differences there?

And then finally, what responsibilities do church members have in upholding the standards of God's word for those who would join their congregation? What responsibilities do you have as a member of the body of Christ?

As a member of the Lord's church? Think about what responsibilities you have as we implement God's standards according to his words for those who would join our congregation.

I hope that you think about those things. I hope that you pray about those things. Would you pray with me? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the church. We thank you for the privilege that you've given us to be a part of it.

[44 : 47] And Lord, we understand that there are standards that you have implemented for your church. What it is to be. Who it is to accept within its membership.

And God, I pray for our elders. I pray for our church body that collectively, Lord, we would take seriously these standards that you have given to us. And that we would also take seriously what it means to be a member of your church.

To take seriously the responsibilities that you have given to us. All the one another commands that you have given to us in your word. Lord, I pray that we would take those things even more seriously than we have before.

That we truly would be a body, Lord, that represents you in a way that pleases you. That we would be a city on a hill that gives light to our community, Lord. That you would use us to advance the gospel.

That you would use us to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. Lord, we need you to be able to do it. We pray that you would do so. And that you'd be glorified by what results.

[45 : 49] We love you and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.