

# Is Church Membership Biblical?

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[ 0 : 00 ] 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-13.

! Remember last month we went to God's Word to find answers to the question, ! What is the purpose of the church?

And so now this month we are moving to Scripture again to find an answer to another question, this being what is the purpose of church membership?

And so this morning's sermon is titled, Is Church Membership Biblical? And so my hope is that this sermon will provide and lay a groundwork, a foundation, as we move along and dig more deeply into many of the things that this sermon will call to mind again that come from God's Word about church membership.

So 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-13. Turn there in your Bible. If you don't have a Bible, there's a Bible in the pew that you can use. If you don't own a Bible, please take that Bible home with you today as a gift from our congregation to you in the hopes that you'll continue to be reading the Word of God.

[ 1 : 28 ] Would you please stand with me right now as we honor God's Word? Again, reading 1 Corinthians 12, verses 12-13.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or frees, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated? I remember growing up in my church when I was going to be baptized.

I had been saved, and I had told my parents, and they had told my pastor, and so he wanted to meet with me, as I often do with anyone in our church who has come to faith in Christ and who wants to be baptized, just to ask them some questions.

[ 2 : 31 ] I want to hear about, you know, their salvation. I want to hear about their conversion. I want to ask them questions about baptism, and what do they understand about baptism? Why do they want to be baptized?

And so I remember that time and being told that when I was baptized, I would become a member of the church, but I didn't really understand what that meant.

Nobody really seemed to answer that question. It was just, well, they go hand in hand. You can be baptized, you're going to be a member of the church. Okay. My first position in ministry was at a United Methodist church where I served as a youth director, but I was going to a Southern Baptist seminary.

And so though I worked there and served as the youth director there, my joining the church was never brought up by anyone, and I was not a member of the church while I served there on staff. It's strange. But then I realized more of the importance of church membership as I was in seminary pursuing becoming a chaplain in the Navy.

[ 3 : 43 ] I felt like that's what the Lord had called me to do. But I realized because I worked at a United Methodist church, because I attended a Southern Baptist seminary, because I grew up Nazarene, none of them wanted to endorse me unless I was a member of their church.

And so I remember talking to Danny and just being like, you know what? I'm just going to have to finish, quit my job, get a job doing whatever, so that we can join a Southern Baptist church, so then I can become a chaplain.

Now, obviously, God had different plans, but again, that's how I saw church membership. Even back then, it was something that would open the door to something else that I wanted to do.

Then when I first became a pastor in my first church there in Leavenworth, Kansas, I joined the church that first Sunday.

It's just something that, you know, you do. And even coming here to Highland Park, if any of you remember, I didn't join our church until the second Sunday that I was here because we'd just kind of forgotten it.

[ 4 : 48 ] And it seems like, well, obviously, if the guy's going to pastor the church, then he must be wanting to be a member of it. But going back to being a young pastor, I'll never forget a conversation I had with somebody who had been coming to our church for a long time.

He'd been coming for years to our church. And he was a guy that many of the other men, the leaders in our church, had recognized as someone who, you know, hey, they'd be great serving in all of these different capacities, but they're not a member of the church.

And so I said to our leaders, I'll talk to him, and I'll talk to him about membership and see what the holdup is or see if he asks any questions and maybe I can provide some kind of guidance.

And so I met with him in my office and I brought up membership and he asked me, well, why is that important? And I struggled to answer that question.

And, you know, I blubbered on about, well, it just means that you're, this is where you want to be in church and you're taking ownership of what's going on here and you got some skin in the game and he's like, well, I feel like I already am doing all of those things.

[ 6 : 15 ] And so I blabbered on some more and I was really upset after that conversation because I thought, here I am a pastor. He asked me a really simple question that I didn't have a really good answer for.

And he didn't really understand through what I was trying to say why church membership mattered at all. And so the longer I've been a pastor, the more I've read God's Word, the better I've understood from Scripture the need, the command from God that His people be committed members of His church.

Likewise, I've continued to see the confusion that many people have about why church membership is important. And I've had conversations where some people have told me, I don't think that it's biblical.

I don't see church membership in the Bible. And they go on to say things like, you know, I can watch a better preacher on TV. I can read my Bible on my own.

I can listen to worship music in the car. That's to my preference. So why should I join a church? And you know, maybe you feel that way.

[ 7 : 41 ] Today, maybe someone watching online feels the same way. They think, you know, I can get everything I need without joining a local body of believers.

Or maybe you just don't even know why. Why is church membership a thing? Why does it matter? And so we're going to look to Scripture to find answers, to gain understanding as to why church membership is important and what the purpose of it is.

And so today, again, I want to establish a biblical basis for church membership. And then through that, arrive, I pray, at an understanding of what it is, which is the main idea of this morning's sermon.

The Bible says that every believer should be a devoted member of the church. The Bible says that every believer should be a devoted member of the church.

And so this sermon is going to ask three questions. What is the biblical basis for church membership? What is the purpose of church membership?

[ 9 : 11 ] And why should church membership matter to you? Those three questions. Again, with the goal being that this sermon will give you an understanding of church membership that messages throughout this month will then build upon.

We need to establish first that foundation, giving clarity where there is confusion. And with that understanding, which leads to a greater commitment to church members, to church membership. And so the first question that we're going to look to Scripture to answer is what is the biblical basis of church membership?

What is the biblical basis of church membership? And so going back to 1 Corinthians 12, 12-13, which we've already read together, let's look at it again.

For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or

Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

[10:32] And so what Paul is telling us here, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is that when a person is saved, they become a member of the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head.

Without the head, the body dies. If a part of the body is severed from the rest, it dies and withers away. The body cannot be subdivided and live.

The body is a complex unit of various and very different parts. Remember, being in elementary school, and they don't do this anymore, but you remember where at the front of the classroom, it was a chalkboard, and hanging up was some maps.

Remember, and the teacher would pull down the maps and there was geography maps, you know, North America, the entire world, whatnot. But in those maps was a pull down of the human body. And it had a skeleton, it had the skeleton with the flesh on it, and then the whole body, and it was terrifying to look at. And so what me and my friends would do when we would come into recess sometimes, we'd try to beat the teacher into the class, and what we would do is we would pull down that map and we would run into our chairs while everybody came in and screamed in horror because of how grotesque the human body can look underneath the skin.

[12:10] But the body is so complex, isn't it? There are so many different parts and the parts are so interconnected, intertwined, like nothing else.

Each part is different, but each part serves a very important purpose. And so the Bible compares us to a body, not to something like a bowl of salad where Christ is the bowl and we're just a bunch of jumbled up pieces mixed up together in there.

No, we have this interconnection. We are a body. The church is a body. And Acts records the establishment of local churches through the ministry efforts of the apostles.

It records in many places many of the names of those who made up those local bodies of believers and the terminology that Scripture used to describe them suggests church membership.

For example, in Acts 6-5, the whole gathering and congregation is used to refer to the church. In Acts 9-26, the church is referred to in Jerusalem the disciples, the disciples who are there.

[13:32] In Acts 14-23, the church is described as every church. In Acts 15-22, it's described as being the whole church.

In Ephesus, particularly, Paul speaks to the elders of the church there. And so, when we see all of those things, what we should take away and understand is that you can't gather a church.

You can't know who the leaders of a church are. You cannot say the whole church was gathered unless you know who was in that church. Who made it up.

Who was a part of it. Likewise, many of the New Testament epistles are written to churches of which many of their members are named.

And instruction is given to the entire congregation, that local body of believers who are there serving in that place, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

[14:38] And instruction is given to those churches. Some letters are addressed to specific people. Timothy, Titus, Philemon. But again, these men were leaders in the church receiving instruction in how to lead God's people, the members of their congregations.

And it's through the many examples of church leadership in Scripture that are established in the New Testament that we see clearly the biblical basis that there is for church membership.

Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 13, verse 17. And here, the instruction for believers and for church leaders is given.

It says, obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning for that would be of no advantage to you.

And so, sometime after I had that unproductive conversation with that prospective church member, I came across this passage. It left off the page and it struck fear in my heart with the realization that I am going to give an account for every member of my church.

[16:18] Which made me think, maybe I want to find a church with only like ten people in it. You know? But seriously. But it's there.

And it's clear. And I can just imagine one day standing before the Lord and Him saying, and bringing up your names, Mike Dersham, James Holt, Julie.

Tell me about them. Holding me accountable for what I didn't do. What I should have done. And so, God is going to hold pastors and church leaders accountable for those whom He places under their

care.

And so, that means that church leaders have a great responsibility. And that means that church leaders must understand that they must know their people well.

They must know their people. And so, it bothers me when we have churches today and not to knock mega churches because some are wonderful and they're blessings.

[ 17 : 41 ] But how many people can come into a church and leave without knowing who their leaders are and their leaders not knowing who they are? Failing to realize that one day they will have to give an account.

And so, we've got to know our people well, but more importantly than that, we've got to make sure that they know the Lord and His Word well. And this is what God's Word instructs.

1 Peter 5, verse 1-4. So, I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings 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.

Not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd appears you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

[ 18 : 48 ] So, there's a great responsibility here. There's a great reward as well. The New Testament consistently though portrays a pattern of leadership in the church that consists of a plurality of elders who collectively oversee the body of believers whom the Lord has assigned them to.

Which means that if God has called them to lead and will hold them accountable for those placed under their care there is and must be a clearly defined structure that he has given for the church and a determination with that of who is a member of the church and who is not.

Because these leaders are going to be held accountable. But for who? Well, for the members of the church. And so, that's where church discipline begins to factor in.

Which I'll talk about more in a moment and I'll go into greater detail probably in a couple weeks. But understand this, the person who refuses to join a church is expressing at some level distrust in that church's leaders.

And distrust in God's design for the church by refusing to place themselves under the leadership of those whom he has placed within his church to serve in that role.

[ 20 : 26 ] And if you think about it, looking at Hebrews chapter 13, it's impossible for them to obey their leaders and submit to them if they refuse to be a part of the church.

If they refuse to be a member of the church. And so, if you are a Christian, you are a part of Christ's body and he expects that you be a member of his church.

Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage in the 3rd century had this to say about the importance of the church and its members.

He said, the spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous. She is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one home. She guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch.

She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. Whoever is separated from the church and is joined to an adulteress is separated from the promises of the church.

[ 21 : 33 ] Nor can he who forsakes the church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger. He is profane. He is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his father who has not the church for his mother.

I could spend a lot more time here but I'm going to move on to the second question which is what is the purpose of church membership? And again we'll be going through this all month long but for now second question what is the purpose of church membership?

And again we're going to dig more deeply into these purposes as the weeks unfold so I'm going to hit some purposes real quick.

first of all receiving instruction from God's word. What is the purpose of church membership? Well you need to come to receive instruction from God's word.

1 Timothy chapter 4 verse 13 Paul's instruction to that young pastor was that until I come devote yourself to the public the public reading.

[ 22 : 43 ] That's when the church is gathered the members to hear their pastor reading to them and explaining to them God's word. Devote yourself to the public reading of scripture to exhortation to

preaching.

And so we understand here that the church is not a social club that you join but it's a fellowship that comes as a result of God's having saved you having saved us and it's rooted in our understanding obeying and applying the word of God.

And we need each other for that. And so again that's why I think the community groups that we are moving to are so important for our congregation right now. Part of the church is to train, is to equip disciples.

And a lot of that great disciple training happens in smaller groups. And so I encourage you to come and be a part of those if you haven't already signed up yet because this is a great purpose that God has for His church.

And I encourage you and I promise you that if you will do so you will be blessed and you will be a blessing to others within our church. It's a great purpose that the Lord has for our body.

[ 24 : 00 ] Second, what is the purpose of the church? Well, serving and edifying one another through the spiritual gifts that we have received from God. Romans 12, 3-8.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think but to think with sober judgment each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members and the members do not all have the same function. So we though many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.

Let us use them if prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

Each member has been gifted by the Lord and he has given you those gifts to use in service to one another.

[ 25 : 17 ] You use your gifts to be a blessing to others and you receive blessings from others for their gifts that they are using that the Lord has given to them. And so one thing that I'm really excited about as well with our new members is the eagerness to plug in and to get involved and to use their spiritual gifts right away to be a blessing to the congregation, ultimately to serve the Lord.

Lord. And so if you're here, you're a member of our church and you haven't found that place to plug in and use your spiritual gifts, I do have homework for you. I want you to come and find me.

I want you to come and find Julia Crouch because she's got the whole document typed up ready for you. She'll show you where to go online and to plug in at Highland Park Baptist Church with the areas of ministry that you feel like the Lord will use your gifts to be a blessing to our congregation.

Thirdly, what is the purpose of the church? Participating in the ordinances of the church. Luke chapter 22 verse 19, speaking of our Lord's last supper with His disciples.

And He took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And so, church membership means participating in communion or the Lord's supper together.

[ 26 : 39 ] It's a meal for the gathered church. It's a reminder when we've gathered and we participate in communion with one another of the sacrifice that Christ has made for us.

Of the unity that we have in Him and to one another because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. It's us coming together and proclaiming to one another into our world that we belong to Christ.

It's important when we take communion that we stop and we reflect together as a church what it is that we're doing and the message it is that we are sending.

We also participate in the ordinance of baptism which leads to the next great purpose of the church which is proclaiming the gospel to the lost.

Matthew 28 18-20 And Jesus came to them and said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and 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.

[ 27 : 52 ] You know we accomplish more together than we do alone. The church members collectively make disciples sharing the gospel and discipling those here whom the Lord has saved who we have baptized that they would be a disciple maker in turn.

I am so thankful to be able to come here on a Sunday morning or a Wednesday night and send my kids off to their classrooms for Sunday school for Awana for Children's Church because I know those who serve in those ministries and I know that they are being taught the word of God. They are being encouraged. They are being disciplined. And I'll tell you as a parent that means the world to me. It's so important to me.

It's so important what you do. You may not stand up behind the pulpit but what you do in the classroom teaching our children, teaching our youth, teaching our adults that's critical and important to the church in making disciples and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. church. To the world. Another great purpose of church membership is church discipline. Now you hear that and you think that doesn't sound so great.

[ 29 : 32 ] Let me explain. You see the Lord loves his church. The Lord cares about his church. church.

The Lord desires for the purity of his church. And so he has called leaders within the church to preserve those very things.

Matthew 18, 15 through 17. The Lord's instruction here about how we are to carry out church discipline. If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

[ 30 : 41 ] And so again, without any kind of formal relationship, any kind of mutual understanding of what it means in the church to follow Christ and to be a part of his church, there would be no need for this kind of spiritual accountability, but we see that Scripture requires it.

That there is this mutual accountability. That this is very important. And now, we must understand that the purpose of church discipline is done to achieve positive outcomes.

Positive outcomes. Purifying the church. Reinforcing the commitment of its members. Confronting the seriousness of unrepentant sin.

And maintaining a unity that ensures our productivity in making disciples. Discipline pursues godliness.

And we know from God's word that the Lord disciplines the one he loves. And so in church discipline, the goal is not to kick people out, but for restoration.

[ 31 : 55 ] For purity. For unity within the body. And the Lord has established a clear process for how he expects that to take place.

Again, this requires mutual submission within the church. Everyone submitting to Christ. Christ. All submitting also to the structure of the church that the Lord has put in place.

Again, to preserve our purity and unity as his church. So that we can function as the salt of the earth. As a city on a hill as he's called us to be.

But you know what often I have witnessed instead of us following Matthew 18 is that we often follow the ways of the world.

And what do people in our world do, in our culture, in our nation do when they're fed up, when they're upset, when they've been hurt, when they have a gripe, when they have a complaint?

[ 32 : 59 ] What do people in our world do most often first? Do you know? Facebook.

Facebook. I can't wait to write all this out, man. I'm going to hammer this person. Or, I'm going to be vague and veiled with what I have to say so that that person who reads it knows that I mean it towards them, but I'm still not saying it directly towards them.

So if they say something to me about it, I can just go, oh, that wasn't you. That wasn't you. It was somebody else. It was something else. The church cannot handle its matters that way.

It's not biblical. And listen, it doesn't achieve any good. People will read that post and you know what they'll do? Just keep on swiping up.

It doesn't accomplish God's purposes and God's ways. You have a problem with a member in your church. The Lord doesn't say, go to social media and air your dirty laundry out before the world.

[ 34 : 13 ] If you really want restoration, then you'll go to that brother, that sister in Christ one-on-one with the purpose of restoration.

Because you love that brother. You love that sister. And if that doesn't work, then you take two or three and we keep going through the steps because it's important.

It's so critical to the church. And it's sad that so many churches have avoided church discipline because it may seem uncomfortable.

But I'll tell you, in the conversations I've had with people one-on-one, that relationship, when it was restored, was stronger, deeper, more loving.

There was more trust. There was more unity. So we've got to do things the Lord's way. That's a great purpose that he has for his church is to maintain the purity and the unity of his bride.

[ 35 : 11 ] Third question. Why should church membership matter to you?

All three of these questions are going to keep coming up as we go through this week. Again, just laying a foundation. But why should church membership matter to you? Remember being in college as a freshman.

And, you know, all fall and winter, we practiced in preparation for the baseball season that would start that spring. And one thing that we all couldn't wait to get our hands on was our uniforms.

We are so excited when we would get new uniforms and to look at them and to try them on. And I remember being a freshman and getting that uniform and just being so excited. But before our coach would even let us get our hands on those uniforms, he would give us a speech.

Same speech, all four years, but a speech that I never forgot. And basically, what he would say is that, gentlemen, when you put this uniform on, I went to a Christian school.

[ 36 : 21 ] Gentlemen, when you put this uniform on, you represent this institution. When we travel and we go play other places, when we play here, the name across your uniform is the name of our institution.

And so I expect that you will conduct yourself in such a way on the field and off the field in a way that will not harm the reputation of this institution.

And secondly, he said, when you wear that uniform, you represent me. It's a privilege to wear that uniform. And so when you wear it, I want you to know that not only do you represent this institution, you also represent me.

And I care a lot about how you conduct yourself on the field and off the field. Most importantly, he said to us, when you wear that uniform, you represent Christ.

Christ. He said, we want to win games. We want to play hard. But more importantly, most importantly, we want to represent the name of Christ supremely above all things whenever we gather and play this game because there's so much more to life than baseball.

[ 37 : 43 ] You never forgot it. And when you put it on, it was special before, but when you put it on, that uniform, it felt heavier. But it was even more rewarding to wear it because of what it represented.

Membership in a church is its affirmation that you are a citizen of Christ's kingdom.

You are not of this world. You are a part of His body. You are a passport-carrying member of the kingdom of God to the nations of the world.

And it authorizes. Your membership authorizes your representing Him. That should mean a lot. It should matter a lot to you. To us. Because as a church, it identifies who it is that we are to love and to serve and to warn and to encourage.

[ 38 : 59 ] Now, we do all of those things for the world as well, right? But we know this is my body. This is my brother. This is my sister in Christ. I'm going to spend eternity with this person.

I'm going to make sure that I love and I serve them well as Christ has loved and served me so well. Church membership enables you to fulfill your biblical responsibilities.

It places you in a real-life situation to carry out all the things that God's Word has called for you to do as a follower of His, as a member of His body.

When we accept members into our church, we acknowledge our God-given responsibility to them and to one another to disciple them, to use our gifts to edify them and for them to do so for us as well.

Church membership should matter to you because it builds a witness and it invites the nations. The boundaries established by Scripture for church membership yield a society of people that invite the nations to come be a part of something better.

[ 40 : 09 ] Matthew 5, 14-16, Jesus says, You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.  
you know, maybe you haven't joined the church. Maybe you've been coming to this church and you haven't joined because the church has hurt you in the past.  
And as one who has experienced it and as one who has talked to many others who have experienced it as well, that is a deep pain.  
And I understand. And so oftentimes a lot of people would join a church but for fear of God's people.

[ 41 : 17 ] How tragic is that? Again, why we make sure that we are seeking purity and unity within our congregation. But if that's you and the church has hurt you, I understand that it's hard to recover from an action when someone who's supposed to represent the Lord and God's people don't act like God's people.

You know, Peter was one of Jesus' disciples. Remember, he was the one who was often the spokesman, was often bold, and sometimes that was bad for him.  
Put his foot in his mouth. Sometimes it was great. In one instance, remember, when Jesus was asking his disciples and he said, who do you say I am? And Peter spoke up and said, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

What a great testimony. Jesus said, upon that testimony I will build my church. But then later we know that Peter, as our Lord was going through his trials leading up to his resurrection, denied him three times.

Three times. And even then, after the Lord's resurrection, remember, Peter would still have issues where he refused to eat with the Gentiles because he was afraid that he would offend the Jews who had come to visit the church and Paul had to go to him face to face and point out his sin.

[ 42 : 57 ] And so, Peter could be a real coward. And Peter could be a real jerk.

And so can we. Because of our sinful nature, sometimes we act cowardly when we should be courageous and bold. And sometimes we act like jerks when we should love one another as we love ourselves.

But though Peter was that way, and though we often act that way, he would be inspired by the Holy Spirit to pen Scripture. And in that inspiration, with that inspiration, he would call the church to be living stones.

To be a spiritual house. And we could look at Peter's past and we could say something like, really Peter? You, coward. You, you jerk.

I know what you've done in the past. You're really going to call me to be a member of a spiritual household with you? Have you been so strong? Have you been so resilient?

[ 44 : 10 ] Have you been so spiritual towards your brothers and sisters in Christ? Christ? But here's the thing. Here's the thing. It's not the strength and love of people like Peter that we have to rely upon and trust.

It's the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ who overcomes our weaknesses. You're not going to find a perfect church because the church is filled with imperfect people.

That's why we need a perfect Savior. But Jesus Christ overcomes our weaknesses, works through our weaknesses, through church membership, through leaders that He has given to proclaim the gospel, to declare the good news of Jesus Christ, that He has come, that He has died on the cross for our sins, that He has risen again, that we who believe have become a part of His body, a part of His family, His temple, His people, His flock, His joy, and His crown.

He has made us what we are, His church, not because of who we are, but because of who He is, and His working in us, and through us, to declare the good news of Jesus Christ.

And He works in us and through us, so that we can be a better reflection of who He is. Church membership matters.

[ 46 : 03 ] It matters to God, and it should matter to each one of us. It's important. It's integral. We have a great responsibility that the Lord has given us to be a city on the hill, that our light would shine, that we would go and make disciples.

It takes all of us together, serving one another, by serving the Lord, to do what He's called us to do, and if we do, we will be that city on a hill that reflects the goodness of God to a world in desperate need of hearing some good news.

And we have it to share. And collectively, we do that. If we're fighting, if we don't see the purpose of it, if all we're doing is thinking about what's in it for me, we won't get the job done.

And we'll have wasted our time and our lives. So, submit to the Lord. Submit to His church. Be a part of it. Forgive. Love.

Not because of who is here, but because of who Christ is. Three questions of application. We're going to have our party tonight, so we won't have a time to get together and go over these, but I encourage you to fill in these blanks, stick this in your Bible, come back to it later today, later this week.

[ 47 : 32 ] If ever you have any questions, you want to talk with me over any of these questions, I'd be glad to talk with you throughout the week. Just email me, text me, call me, and we'll find a time to do that.

First question. What consequences, what consequences does a church face when it doesn't take church membership seriously?

What consequences does a church face when it doesn't take church membership seriously? I'll tell you, part of the consequences is we become a club.

We become like any other club in the world, and that's not going to achieve the purposes that the Lord has for us. Second question, what responsibilities come with church membership?

Think about this. Go through the Scriptures. Do some work on your own. Look to God's Word. what responsibilities do you have as a member of His church?

[ 48 : 31 ] And then thirdly, what benefits come with church membership? We'll talk more about that in the weeks to come, and I'll just tell you that there's tremendous benefits that come with being a member of His church.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for this time that we've had together to be in Your Word to seek to answer the question, what is the purpose of church membership?

Is it biblical? God, I hope and I pray that through the Scriptures that we have looked through today that answers to those questions have been given, that You will continue to work in our hearts and our minds, compelling us to move back to Your Word as we see that there's a great expectation that You have for us to be actively involved in Your church as a member of Your body, to put our spiritual gifts to use in service to one another, to advance the kingdom of Jesus Christ, to go and to make disciples, declaring the good news of who Christ is and what Christ has done.

And so, Lord, I pray that as we go through this month, going back to Your Word, talking about church membership that You would incite within Your people a desire to be a member of Your church, to see the importance of it, the great responsibility that comes with it, and ultimately the wonderful joy that comes with being a part of Your church, a member of Your church.

And so, God, we're thankful for the new members that have joined to our church. And, Lord, we pray that You would use Highland Park Baptist Church to be a place that seeks the purity of Your people, the unity of Your people, ultimately, the proclamation of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

[ 50 : 37 ] And we need You, Lord, to do it. We pray that You would and You would be pleased with the results. And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. . Thank you.