

Notes from *Committing to One Another: Church Membership*

Healthy Church Study Guides (9 Marks)

Bobby Jamieson, Mark Dever, and Jonathan Leeman

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AN IMPORTANT MARK

“In one sense, church membership begins when Christ saves us and makes us a member of his body. Yet his work must then be given expression in an actual local church. In that sense, church membership begins when we commit to a particular body. Being a Christian means being joined to a church.”¹

“Church membership is not simply a record of a box we once checked. It’s not a sentimental feeling. It’s not an expression of affection toward a familiar place. It’s not an expression of loyalty or disloyalty toward parents. It should be the reflection of a living commitment, or it is worthless. Indeed, it’s worse than worthless; it’s dangerous...”²

“The practice of church membership among Christians occurs when Christians grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular local church, we are telling the church’s pastors and other members not just that we commit to them, but that we commit to them in gathering, giving, prayer, and service. We are telling them to expect certain things from us and to hold us accountable if we don’t follow through.”³

“Biblical membership means taking responsibility. It comes from our mutual obligations as spelled out in all of Scriptures one another passages-love one another, service one another, encourage one another. All of these commands should be encapsulated in the covenant of a healthy church.”⁴

¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 12.

² Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 12-13.

³ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

⁴ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

“Sadly, it is not uncommon to find a big gap between the number of people officially on the membership rolls and the number who regularly attend.”⁵

“According to one recent study, the typical Southern Baptist church has 233 members with only 70 attending on Sunday morning.”⁶

“By calling someone a member of your church, you are saying that that individual has your church’s endorsement as a Christian. So if a congregation has not set its eyes upon an individual for months, even years, how can it testify that that person is faithfully running the race? If an individual is missing in action but has not joined some other Bible-believing church, how do we know if he or she was ever really a part of us (see 1 John 2:19)?...When a person is perpetually absent, a church endorsement is, at best, naive; at worst, dishonest.”⁷

“I hope to see the membership statistics in churches become more and more meaningful so that the members in name become members in fact. From time to time, this means removing names from the church rolls (though not from our hearts). Most often, this means teaching new members what God intends for the church and continually reminding current members of their commitment to the life of the church.”⁸

“We don’t love old friends well by allowing them to hold onto their membership in our congregations for sentimental reasons.”⁹

THE NEED FOR MEMBERSHIP

1. **“Church membership is a covenant.** That is, it’s a solemn agreement between a Christian and a local church. In this covenant:
2. **The church affirms the Christian’s profession of faith in Christ.** That is, by extending church membership to an individual, the church is saying, “As far as we can tell, you’re a Christian. We’re putting our seal of approval on your claim to follow Christ.
3. **The church promises to oversee the Christian’s discipleship.** This comes through teaching, preaching, the elders’ oversight, and the mutual building up which all members of the church are to engage in (see Eph. 4:11-16).

⁵ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

⁶ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 13.

⁷ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.

⁸ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.

⁹ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 14.

4. The Christian promises to regularly assemble with and submit to the church. By committing to a church through membership, an individual Christian promises to regularly gathering with this church and to submit to its authority and teaching.”¹⁰

THE MANDATE FOR MEMBERSHIP

“One reason people don’t join a church is because they think church membership is not in the New Testament. And some churches don’t have formal membership because they don’t see it in the New Testament.”¹¹

“...when we say, “Church membership is biblical,” we don’t claim to find an exact copy of any church’s membership practices (which may include a membership class, an interview, and so on) in the New Testament. Rather, the New Testament clearly shows that churches are to have this kind of formal belonging and that all Christians are to commit themselves to local churches in this way...consider 1 Corinthians 15, a passage that is very important for our understanding and practice of church discipline.”¹²

“In Hebrews 13:17, the author gives us very important teaching about how Christians are to relate to the leaders of their churches.”¹³

THE GOAL OF MEMBERSHIP

“Many people think church membership is simply putting your name on a list.”¹⁴

“The goal of church membership is that every single church member would help the whole church grow to maturity in Christ.”¹⁵

“In Ephesians 4, Paul exhorts us to live in unity in the church in light of the unity we have in Christ (vv. 1-6). Then, after explaining how Christ conquered death and gave gifts to his church

¹⁰ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 17-18.

¹¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 21.

¹² Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 22.

¹³ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

¹⁴ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

¹⁵ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

(vv.8-10), he specifically names some of those gifts and talks about the purpose which Christ gave them...”¹⁶

THE CHALLENGES OF MEMBERSHIP

“Every member of the church is called to overcome divisions and pursue unity in the church in order to reflect the church’s union with Christ.”¹⁷

“Just as Paul insists that the church must be united because it is the body of Christ, and Christ is not divided...Christ was crucified for them, and they were baptized into his name. They belong to him, they are saved by him, they are one body in him, and so they should live in a way that expresses that unity.”¹⁸

THE NATURE OF MEMBERSHIP

“The members of a local church are *interdependent*. We all need each other. No one should say that the church doesn’t need them, and no one can say that they don’t need other church members.”¹⁹

“In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul begins discussing spiritual gifts, which the Corinthians had been using in selfish and self-serving ways. In the opening verses of the chapter Paul reminds them that all their different gifts are given by the same Spirit and for the common good (vv. 1-11).”²⁰

THE DUTIES OF MEMBERSHIP

“‘Duty’ sounds like a bad word today, or at least an unpleasant one. And it’s true that some duties are unpleasant, or frustrating or seemingly pointless.”²¹

¹⁶ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 27.

¹⁷ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 31.

¹⁸ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 32.

¹⁹ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 35.

²⁰ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 35.

²¹ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 39.

“As church members, we have the duty to imitate and submit to our leaders, to regularly assemble with the church, and to love and serve our family members. All of these duties are means by which we grow in godliness and help others to grow.”²²

THE GLORY OF MEMBERSHIP

“Church members-and the activity of regularly assembling with the church which it entails-should offer a foretaste of the glory of heaven.”²³

“The New Testament portrays our present life in the church as a foretaste of this final, perfect assembly...Our membership in the church is meant to be a reference to our membership in God’s heavenly assembly.”²⁴

²² Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 39.

²³ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 43.

²⁴ Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership* eds. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 45.