

Notes from 7 Basics of Belonging

The Meaning of Church Membership

Sam Rainer

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Introduction: Why Join A Church?

“The church universal includes every believer of all time. Christ unites all of us. But we all also have a responsibility to a local church.”¹

“The New Testament does not teach “just me, Jesus, and no one else” but rather a connection to a local church.”²

“Our culture can push against commitment. It’s too easy to “like/unlike” and “follow/unfollow.” The church is your opportunity to be counter-cultural in the way Christ calls us.”³

“God has you here for a reason. People choose churches for any number of reasons. Proximity, doctrine, personal connections, or vision are all reasons why people gravitate towards a local church.”⁴

“You need your church, and your church needs you.”⁵

“The seven basics of belonging represent the foundation of church membership...I believe every member should fulfill these seven basics of belonging in their local church.

1. Worship: Saying “yes” to God
2. Grow: Making disciples who make disciples
3. Serve: Reaching outward beyond yourself
4. Give: Honoring God with your offering
5. Pray: Prioritizing God’s will through prayer
6. Seek unity: Keeping the main thing the main thing
7. Sacrifice: Putting others before yourself.”⁶

“The church like a family — some are healthier than others. The goal is to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.”⁷

Chapter One: Saying “Yes” to God

¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 8.

² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 10.

³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 10-11.

⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 11.

⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 12.

⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 13.

⁷ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 14.

“The point of worship is not to get something from God but rather to get God Himself.”⁸

“The emotions driving your personal preferences are not the problem. The real problem occurs when you selfishly want to impose your preferences on everything else. A worship service does not exist for you to hear your favorite songs or your favorite style of music. I hope you have not chosen your church because of the music. I hope you chose your church because you want to give God glory with other genuine worshippers.”⁹

“Misdirected passion is a common problem in worship...But there is another, more subtle problem with the way we can worship: routine.”¹⁰

“Routine makes you numb to the obvious.”¹¹

“When you make worship a priority of church membership, then you consistently work to align yourself with God’s will. You say “yes” to God. Good worship is an awareness you are in the presence of God. Worship is not that which is most inspirational, most beautiful, most historical, most cherished, most trendy, or most popular.”¹²

“You will not remember every worship experience, every point of every sermon, or every lesson at church. But like exercise, the cumulative effect of regular worship makes you stronger and healthier.”¹³

“Worship is an all-encompassing submission to Jesus.”¹⁴

Chapter Two: Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

“A disciple is someone who follows Christ. You can’t claim to belong to Christ if you are not willing to follow Him.”¹⁵

“In the Gospels, Jesus uses the term disciples to describe those who completely devoted themselves to Him. The book of Acts records that these followers of Christ were called “Christians...Whatever term you use, the Bible is clear. You are to grow spiritually, and you are to help others grow as well.”¹⁶

“All churches and all Christians are called to make disciples who make disciples.”¹⁷

“God created us as social creatures because He is social. There is a perfect and beautiful relationship within the Trinity – the Father with the Son with the Spirit. This relationship can be

⁸ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 15.

⁹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 17.

¹⁰ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 18.

¹¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 18.

¹² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 19.

¹³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 21.

¹⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 21.

¹⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 25.

¹⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 26.

¹⁷ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 27.

perplexing and mysterious, but it is also reassuring God wants to be with us. We should want to be with Him. God also wants us to be with each other. Spiritually, you do not grow by yourself. Nobody can grow alone. Spiritual growth occurs in proximity to others. Isolation does not produce disciples. Disciples are made through the ministry of the church.”¹⁸

“Eighty-three percent of people will stay in a church if they attend worship services and also join a group. However, only 16 percent of people will stay in the church if they attend a worship service only and never join a group.”¹⁹

“A few years ago, we did some research on why young people drop out of the church. One of the biggest reasons is they lack a connection to more mature disciples. We found a positive correlation: The more adults that invest in the life of a young person, the more likely that young person will stay in the church.”²⁰

“Most people do not just decide one day to leave the church. They fade and slowly start attending less. The way to stop the fade is building a connection to a small group.”²¹

“Spiritual growth occurs in many ways. You grow through the spiritual disciplines like fasting, prayer, confession, and meditation. Daily Bible reading and personal devotional time are imperative to being a follower of Christ. You must listen to sermons regularly and learn from skilled and mature teachers and preachers. And, as I have mentioned, you must be active in a group setting with other like-minded believers.”²²

Chapter Three: Reaching Outward Beyond Yourself

“The walls of the church are not protective barriers to community problems. Quite the opposite – the church should be the vehicle by which people are sent into the hardest, darkest parts of the neighborhood.”²³

“Jesus makes a clear statement in Mark’s gospel: ‘For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.’ The King of kings serves. If God Himself expects to serve, then you should as well. The call of every Christian is to be selfless (others first), not selfish (ourselves first).”²⁴

“Our third basic of belonging is serving: reaching outward beyond yourself. It’s not about you! It’s about sharing with others, reaching others, and serving others. The way the church fulfills God’s outward calling is through serving.”²⁵

¹⁸ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 28.

¹⁹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 28.

²⁰ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 29-30.

²¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 30.

²² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 31.

²³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 35.

²⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 36.

²⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 37.

“Your service today is the foundation for the next 100 years of work.”²⁶

“Greatness in God’s kingdom comes through serving. How did Jesus serve? He gave His life!”²⁷

“Belonging to a church means serving through the church. These next five steps will help you get started. Step one: Look for opportunities. Start observing what your church is doing... The more you are aware, the more quickly you will find your fit and the better you can help others find their fit.”²⁸

“Step Two: Volunteer where there is a need. Perhaps your calling isn’t to find the perfect fit for you but rather to fill in the gaps where the church is short volunteers.”²⁹

“Step three: Take the initiative! You should not wait for someone to “volun-told” you. Church leaders often must scramble for volunteers and end up twisting arms to fill necessary spots. Start your church membership by telling the leadership you are ready to begin right away.”³⁰

“Step four: Invite your neighbors to church. Serving always compels you outward. One of the best ways to serve Jesus is to invite others to be part of His body.”³¹

“Step five: Share Jesus with people. Inviting people to church is critically important, but it is not evangelism. If you know Jesus, then you have the best news anyone can hear. People need to hear the gospel from you!”³²

“We are the rest of the story. We are the ones completing what began in Acts.”³³

Chapter Four: Honoring God With Your Suffering

“Guilt is a terrible motivator with a short duration.”³⁴

“I am convinced some churches do not experience revival because the people are holding back their giving from God.”³⁵

“The issue is not wealth – whether you’ve got it or not. The issue is whether you are pursuing God or forgetting God. Every one of your giving contributions matter to God. Every gift is important to God. But our calling is not to give from a place of surplus. Our calling is to give from a place of sacrifice.”³⁶

²⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 37.

²⁷ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 38.

²⁸ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 39.

²⁹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 40.

³⁰ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 40.

³¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 40.

³² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 41.

³³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 42.

³⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 46-47.

³⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 47.

³⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 48.

“Sacrificial giving is the antidote to greed.”³⁷

“Generosity becomes sacrificial when it starts to hurt. Sacrificial giving changes your lifestyle.”³⁸

“The best way to unwind greed in your life is to give sacrificially. The best way to prevent greed is to give sacrificially.”³⁹

Chapter Five: Prioritizing God’s Will Through Prayer

“Prayer happens when people have the time or when their world starts to crumble. Making prayer a spiritual discipline is not common enough among church members.”⁴⁰

“You cannot prioritize God’s will without praying.”⁴¹

“In Luke 11:1, the disciples ask Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Jesus then uses the Lord’s Prayer as a teaching tool. When you examine the Lord’s Prayer, you will notice it starts with God, not us. The famous prayer begins with an acknowledgement of who God is – our Father. This pattern is found throughout the Bible. The creation account in Genesis 1 starts with God: “In the beginning God...” The ubiquitous John 3:16 begins with God loving the world. The same principle applies to the Lord’s Prayer. Prayer is all about God in the same way everything else should be all about God. As Jesus states in Matthew 6, prayer is about His name, His kingdom, and His will.”⁴²

“Prayer helps us connect two concepts. First, God is infinite, awesome, and beyond us. Second, God is near to us – right here, right now. Prayer is the way finite people communicate with an infinite God.”⁴³

“Prayer is a strategy for life. Prayer is a way to discern the daily tactics for living that enable you to thrive spiritually.”⁴⁴

Chapter Six: Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

“Our sixth basic of belonging is unity. As a church member, you must keep the main thing the main thing. The goal of every church member is to share the love of Christ with a lost world.”⁴⁵

“The church is most unified when the members live out who they are.”⁴⁶

³⁷ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 50.

³⁸ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 51.

³⁹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 52.

⁴⁰ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 55.

⁴¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 56.

⁴² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 57.

⁴³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 57.

⁴⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 59.

⁴⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 67.

⁴⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 67.

“Unity and the message of the gospel are inseparable concepts. The most unified churches are most focused on the gospel. The healthiest churches inwardly are the most focused outwardly.”⁴⁷

“God’s Word and God’s mission should be the unifying force of every church.”⁴⁸

“Accountability is important. Sometimes it’s necessary to call out people for being divisive...Don’t just desire unity, seek unity. What often gets passed off as charity reality isn’t...Our goal is a deeper love and a stronger unity.”⁴⁹

“Healthy individuals are who are working tirelessly to keep the main thing the main thing. You should speak up against church bullies. You will need to sacrifice your own preferences so others can know Christ. Additionally, challenge your peers not to be selfish with their own preferences. And vocalize your encouragement of leadership. Keep the main thing the main thing.”⁵⁰

Chapter Seven: Putting Others Before Yourself

“The last basic of belonging to a church is sacrifice. Sacrifice in the church means putting God’s work above your preferences and putting others before yourself.”⁵¹

“You do not join a church to see what you can get out of it. You join a church to give into the body of Christ.”⁵²

Conclusion: I Joined a Church. Now What?

“But every member should fulfill these seven basics of belonging in their local church.

1. Worship: Saying “yes” to God
2. Grow: Making disciples who make disciples
3. Serve: Reaching outward beyond yourself
4. Give: Honoring God with your offering
5. Pray: Prioritizing God’s will through prayer
6. Seek Unity: Keeping the main thing the main thing
7. Sacrifice: Putting others before yourself”⁵³

“While church attendance will not solve all your problems, the regular pattern and rhythm of being with the fellowship of the saints is good for your heart, mind, and soul.”⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 68.

⁴⁸ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 69.

⁴⁹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 71.

⁵⁰ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 71-72.

⁵¹ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 75.

⁵² Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 77.

⁵³ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 84.

⁵⁴ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 86.

“The problem is discouragement is an even more powerful and contagious force. When you are an encourager, you can change the mood of just about everyone around you.”⁵⁵

“Church membership is an important part of following Christ. Enjoy the fellowship of believers at your church. Commit to God’s mission with them. With your church, be an active agent of good in your community.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 87.

⁵⁶ Sam Rainer, *7 Basics of Belonging* (Franklin, TN: Church Answers, 2021), 89.