

Covenant Membership Discussion

Big Idea:

Jesus makes us His covenant people through the gospel. This reality is displayed through our commitment to be His people together in a local church.

Key Verse:

“¹²For 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.

Introduction:

A Covenant-Public (Commitment or Promise) vs. Consumer (Take it or leave it-Shopping) Mentality in the Church

My Story of Growth

I came into the church with a Consumer Mentality- What could the church provide for me, potential romantic relationships, friendships, social club, entertainment, information and teaching....As I didn't get those things I stopped coming or moved on. I was using the church, must like we use a gym or a grocery store.....As I grew in my love and knowledge of the Lord that started to change....I began to realize God wanted me to give myself for the church rather than always seeking to use the church for myself.

- Seen in our current marriage relationships.....don't care for others but seek to use them

It was in giving myself to and for others that Christ actually used and empowered me. This is most evidently seen when we go through seasons of giving.....Time I didn't want to go to church.....

- Seeing Christ's relationship with me and the church

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God

Ephesians 5:25-27-²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish

John 10:14-15 “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

A Vision of the Local Church

- **A Family-** Rom. 8:16-17- “16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- **A Body-** 1 Cor. 12:12- “12 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.
- **An Embassy-** Mt.16:18-19 “18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^[b] I will build my church, and the gates of hell^[c] shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^[d] in heaven.”

Elders and Deacons Purpose Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[c] and teachers,^[d] ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

The Definition and Sighting of Covenants

God and Man:

- Noah- God promises not to flood the earth
- Abraham- God promises to bless him and his offspring, to bless the whole world.
- Moses- Conditional & Unconditional Covenant....Keep the Law
- Jesus- Unconditional....Will be our God, rescue us from our sin.

Man and Man:

- Jonathan and David
- The People with David
- Josiah and the people of Israel-
 - 2 Chronicles 34:29-32 ²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.³⁰ And the king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³¹ And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.³² Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers
- Nehemiah and the people of Israel:
 - Nehemiah 9:32-38-³² “Now, therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love, let not all the hardship

seem little to you that has come upon us, upon our kings, our princes, our priests, our prophets, our fathers, and all your people, since the time of the kings of Assyria until this day.³³ Yet you have been righteous in all that has come upon us, for you have dealt faithfully and we have acted wickedly. ³⁴ Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept your law or paid attention to your commandments and your warnings that you gave them. ³⁵ Even in their own kingdom, and amid your great goodness that you gave them, and in the large and rich land that you set before them, they did not serve you or turn from their wicked works. ³⁶ Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves. ³⁷ And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.³⁸ [e] **“Because of all this we make a firm covenant in writing; on the sealed document are the names of [f] our princes, our Levites, and our priests.**

Our Process as a Church

- Come
- Connect
- Covenant
- Calling

Reasons for a Church Covenant

Biblically

- Numerical Record of professed believers was kept
 - Acts 2:41 says, “⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls
 - The Church got together to talk about caring for the widows in Acts 6. Paul apparently had a list of some kind as he was entering houses and dragging Christians off to prison in Acts 8:3. Romans 16:1-16 seems to be a list of church members that Paul is greeting
- Metaphor of the body and it’s members
 - Vs.14 says, “¹⁴ For the body does not consist of one member but of many.” Vs. 24b-27 says, “ But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,²⁵ that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”
- Shepherds are to know their flock and the flock their shepherds
 - Care for flock

- 1 Peter 5:1-3 which says; “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:²shepherd 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; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” (ESV).
 - Submit to leaders
 - Hebrews 13:7,17 which says:“⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.....“¹⁷Obey 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.
- The One Another’s:
 - “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)... Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10) “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25) “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2) “Confess your sins to each other...” (James 5:16) “...Pray for each other.” (James 5:16) “...Do not slander one another.” (James 4:11)
- Required for the holiness of the church and honor of Christ’s name
 - Church Discipline- Mt. 18:15-17 “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.

Practically

- **INFORM**- Gives a clearer picture of who and where we are, gives a place to discuss body life in a way that is more helpful. Let’s people know what’s going on in our finances, ministry, vision.
- **CLARIFY**- It helps everyone put their cards up front. Here’s who we are, we want to know who you are. What we believe, how we operate, our mission and purpose. Clarifies the Scriptures and what it means to actually follow Christ.
- **UNIFY**- It helps us to be unified and committed around the core of what we believe and commit to live out together.

Historically

- **Didache**-Membership and requirement’s/ Catechism....

- **Catholic Church**-Membership by birth or Region
- **Protestant Reformation**- Justification by Faith. Regenerate church membership. Only recently that membership has disappeared. Cultural....

The Necessity and Hardship of Change

- Change is hard because it's different and sometimes unknown.....
- Change is Necessary for growth (Maturity and Numerically)
 - Change doesn't mean the past is invalid or entirely incorrect.....better way!
 - We must be a people willing to change where God would lead us.

Addressing 4 different groups in the church

- Those who've gone through the class, read through the covenant and agree
- Those who're grandfathered in (Tenor, Character, Faithfulness)
- Those we want to be in covenant with (Go through the class, meet with an elder)
 - Have questions, want to discern.....
- Those who don't yet know Christ or don't yet want to commit to follow Christ in an accountable way.

Addressing Criticism/ Challenges to Covenant/ Membership

- #1- Membership isn't in the Bible, man-made addition
- #2-Membership is just a means for leadership to try and control and change me. "Legalistic"
- #3-Membership just brings division and disunity, I've experienced it. Stay away.

Clear Next Steps

- Sunday Night Discussion
- Covenant in November
- Date for Covenant Affirmation and Sunday Night-Feb.24th

