

CORE Seminar  
Membership Matters  
Session 1  
Part 1: Why Membership Matters

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00:00 / 0:08

### Pre-Session

- Welcome people
- Describe the membership process – Six Sessions – Lasts about 2 hours total [normally on a Sunday morning from **9:45-11:45am**]
  - **Session 1:**
    - Why join the local church?
    - Discover FBC: The history & story of FBC
  - **Session 2:**
    - Discover How FBC Worships and Glorifies God
    - How we do life together in Community/ Grow in Community
  - **Session 3:**
    - Equipped to Serve/ What happens “Once you’re in.”
    - And, Engage the World/ Missions & Outreach: where you will have the opportunity to share your salvation story.
- Everyone sign the sheet at the door?
- Everyone have their **session 1 sheets**?
  - This is our way to share specific information... also it’s a great way to take notes.
  - Last, when there is too much to print – we’ll have a QR code or a link for you to access.
- **Session host introduces themselves.**
  - [name, family, job, something interesting about yourself]
- **Ask everyone to *briefly* introduce themselves.**
  - [Large group to the people around you/ or at their table]
  - [first and last name, something interesting about themselves]

00:00 / 0:08

Slide 1 – Membership Matters:

Welcome!

This morning is a big day for FBC Portland. You guys are the first “official” group of people that have stated you wanted to join First Baptist in membership – AND the first non-members to officially go through this class... with the intention of joining.

Just know, what you are doing this morning – we don’t take lightly. Your ministry team has worked on the content for these sessions **A LOT** over the past 24+ months.

These sessions have been written and revised to ensure that everything we cover - over the next several weeks - is **necessary** for you to understand why membership matters at First Baptist Portland.

The team, made up of your ministry staff and the Spiritual Leadership Team, have dedicated considerable time preparing these sessions for you. We are confident that we are ready to guide everyone through what it takes to understand what membership looks like at FBC.

### [Slide 2 – Martyn Lloyd-Jones]

***We must re-grasp the idea of church membership as being the membership of the body of Christ and as the biggest honour which can come man’s way in this world***

~ Martyn Lloyd-Jones

### Formal Process

In these sessions, the things we will be talking about- *in reference to church membership* - are not new things. Throughout the church’s history, the importance of church membership has been taught. ***As a church, we’ve just forgotten the teachings and the importance of membership.***

In fact, we have accepted a more informal process that we would never accept in any other covenant bond.

### [Slide 3 – Informal vs. Formal]

#### Informal vs. Formal

- FBC currently has informal process
  - **Informal:**
    - **A kin** to an arranged marriage...
  - **Formal**

- The leadership [pastoral staff and SLT] would like to make this a formal process.

### So, why is it a good idea for FBC to have a formal membership class?

- It gives First Baptist an opportunity to introduce themselves to the potential member.
- It gives the prospective member an idea of what they can expect from FBC and to be honest what FBC expects of the prospective member. [we'll talk about this more in a moment – but it all comes down to an active faith at a **particular church** – First Baptist... ]
- It gives FBC an opportunity to hear their story... to get to know them and their family.
- **And, it promotes unity within the church** - Membership classes help everyone in the church enter “on the same page.”
  - No surprises

### Requirements:

- **Have fun** – we’re going to be very relaxed
- **Ask Questions** – if I say something and you want more explanation. Please ask. This is the place and time to ask away.

As we meet, there will be an interactive element to these sessions – some back & forth between you and I.

1. I will ask questions – and the first one is now...

### [Slide 4: INTERACTIVE ELEMENT]

#### What topics do you expect to be covered in these Membership sessions?

*[write answers on the board and keep them there... cross off as you move through each session.]*

### [Slide 5: Why Membership Matter?]

**So, the main question we are here to answer this morning is this – “Why does membership in the local church matter?”**

### [Slide 6: Definition of Local church]

A local church is:

- **A local church is a gathering of *two or more* disciples of Jesus Christ, encouraging one another and not neglecting to meet in His name regularly.**
  - Matthew 18:19-20

- Again I say to you, *if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*"
- Hebrews 10:25
  - *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another*, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Two or more...** this is all of you... but there's another beautiful aspect about the church we see in Scripture and we see at First Baptist Portland...

- We don't all look like each other
- And we don't all talk like each other

### [Slide 7: INTERACTIVE ELEMENT Where you from]

Let's try something really quick to emphasize these points. I'm going to ask questions, and if this applies to you please stand [*remain standing throughout if your able*]:

- How many people grew up in Sumner County **BUT OUTSIDE OF PORTLAND?**
- How many people grew up in Tennessee **BUT OUTSIDE OF SUMNER COUNTY... a county other than Sumner?**
- How many grew up in the south **BUT OUTSIDE OF TENNESSEE?**
- How many grew up in any other part of the United States?
- How many grew up in another country?

### [Slide 8: This room shows us two things]

Look around the room... those standing show us two things:

- One, Portland is **changing**
- And, First Baptist is **changing**. [*you may be seated*]

God has called all of us – from zip codes outside the 37148 for one purpose...

- to bring Him glory through His local church.

So, basically, there's a reason you are here in Portland... there's a reason you're here at First Baptist.

*Lets continue...*

### [Slide 9: The local church has a]

Because you are here for a reason – that God has called all of you from different areas – we **KNOW** that

## The local church at First Baptist Portland has a

- **role, purpose and mission**
- **a role** - to preach and teach the complete gospel of Jesus Christ and administer the church ordinances of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper.
  - Ephesians 5:19
  - 1 Timothy 4:13
  - **2 Timothy 4:1-2**
    - *I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*
  - **Matthew 28:19**
    - *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*
  - 1 Corinthians 11:17-26
- **purpose** - collectively grow in discipleship, sanctification, and unity around God's mission.
  - 1 Peter 1:14-16
  - **Ephesians 4:14-16**
    - *so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
- **and a mission** - bring glory to God by making disciples of Jesus Christ and sharing His gospel. – The Great Commission
  - **Matthew 28:18-20**
    - *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*
  - **Acts 1:8**
    - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Any questions?

00:00 / 0:09

## Slide 10: What is membership

### What is Membership?

OK... so God has called us from a lot of different areas to First Baptist – and we were amazed.

And He called us to the local church at FBC – and this local church has a role a purpose and a mission.

So, what is membership and why join?

## [Slide 11 – Membership defined]

- **Membership defined:**

- the state of belonging to an organization/ all the people who belong to an organization<sup>1</sup>
- The meaning of MEMBERSHIP is **the state or status of being a member.** <sup>2</sup>

Based on these definitions, I don't see any alarm on your faces – or it doesn't seem like any of you are against membership as an idea. **[Am I Right?]**

Culturally, I don't think we have anything against membership...

To prove this, I'm going to throw up several slides on the screens above. These slides are going to have companies or entities that we normally associate with membership:

**Now here are the rules:**

- ***If you like what's on the slide – give me a thumbs up or give me a cheer***
- ***If you don't like what's on the slide – give me a thumbs down or boo***
- ***If you're indifferent – just give me a shoulder shrug...***

Here's the other rule... have some fun with this...

## [Slides 12-21 : typical membership]

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/membership>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/membership>

1. **Amazon Prime** – and all the mom & pop businesses go – “boo” / The only way I really shop anymore...
2. **TV show subscriptions** – who’s cut the cord to cable... and saved some money?
3. **CEMC** – electricity is a great thing!
4. **Costco/ Sams** – who needs 4000 rolls of single ply toilet paper?
5. **Golf/ country club memberships** – how many golfer’s in the house? **This one is for you!**
6. **Planet Fitness** – It’s the New Year! Who wants some judgment free zone?
7. **Kroger Plus** – Groceries & gas are always a good combination
8. **Gaming Memberships [playstation to xbox to Nintendo to utomik]** – for all of you under 30s [men/ boys]
9. **The Godfather/ mob** – if you cheer then we have extra questions for you during membership interviews.
10. **AARP** – Yes, I did place them beside the mob for a reason... they always know how and where to find you.

### [Slides 22 : all together]

Now, I would say this is not an exhaustive list... but when we think of membership, these things are what we tend to think of.

Bring up “membership,” and everyone’s cool... **BUT** when we mention “**church membership**” well people tend to *squirm* – to feel uneasy.

### [Slide 23: 6 reasons for membership]

So, let’s ease your tension and give you **Six Reasons Why Membership Matters**

### Slide 24: membership is Biblical

#### 1) **MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH IS BIBLICAL**

One reason some people don’t join a local church is because they think that church membership is not in the NT... **AND** some churches don’t have a formal membership because they don’t see it in the New Testament.

- a. **So is it OR isn’t it**
- b. **It’s biblical – kind of...**
- c. **Not directly:** Meaning, there is no specific text or texts that explicitly advocate joining the local church.
  - i. If you open up the New Testament, you won’t find a story about – say – Priscilla and Aquila moving to the city of Rome – checking out one church... then another... and then finally deciding to join a third. From

what we can tell, no one went “church shopping” because really there was only one church in each community.

- ii. There is no verse or collection of verses that directly state, "You must join the local church."
- iii. In essence, there is no "11th commandment" explicitly requiring membership in a local church.

#### **d. BUT YES!**

- The local church was given for the disciples of Jesus Christ to grow in **discipleship** and **sanctification**. [Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35]
- The local church was given to meet the needs of its **members** [widows & orphans] and the apostles of Jesus Christ [Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35; Acts 6, throughout the ministry of Paul as well as his imprisonment; 1 Timothy 5:9-12 implies that the church kept a list of widows - kind of like our shut-in ministry]
- The local church was given for members to make a **commitment** – not just a casual association. [Acts 5:12-13 – The local church in Jerusalem faced the decision of those who did not want to join them in a public setting for fear of persecution.]
- The local church was given for members to be “sent out from” – to go on **mission** to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ [Acts 13]
- And, the local church was given for disciples of Christ to **meet, pray** and make **decisions** on behalf of the local church [Acts 15]
- **And last, in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4** – we see the establishment of leadership in the local church.

### **Slide 25: made up of members**

#### **2) THE LOCAL CHURCH IS MADE UP OF MEMBERS.**

- a. In **1 Corinthians 12:12, 25-27**, Paul takes our definition of the local church a step further. He refers to those who join the church as **members** of the body, emphasizing that each **member** plays a crucial role.

In making this reference, Paul uses the analogy of the human body. In the human body, we have different body parts contributing to the health of the whole. Just like the human body, every member of the local church has a purpose and is vital to the local church’s health. Paul emphasizes the importance of each individual utilizing their unique gifts to strengthen and build up the entire church. In doing so, Paul underscores the unity of disciples



in the local church, highlighting their collective purpose of honoring Jesus Christ.

- b. When God leads individuals to His local church, it is for a specific reason - to utilize the unique talents and gifts given to them. If those drawn to the local church choose not to join as active "members," the church becomes incomplete, functioning like a person who has suffered a stroke, with impaired abilities, and the members as a whole experience a sense of "suffering together."
  - i. **1 Corinthians 12:26** - If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

### Slide 26: Membership is how we represent Jesus.

#### 3) MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH IS HOW WE REPRESENT JESUS.

- a. In **John 13:35**, Jesus is talking to His disciples and He says

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

One another is the *dative masculine plural*... so Jesus is telling them I have given you love... I have modeled it for you... I have shown you love... NOW you go [as a group] together and love one another...

And when you love one another [in the plural] like I have loved you ... then people will know that you are my disciples.

So, when we join in membership, we're joining together [plural] to reveal the love that He has already revealed to us.

### Slide 27: Membership is how we serve others.

#### 4) MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH IS HOW WE SERVE OTHER CHRISTIANS. [59 one another's in Scripture]

- a. In **Ephesians 4:11-16 and 25-32**, Paul writes to the local church in Ephesus that they are responsible for one another... to love, serve, warn, and encourage.
- b. So, just as I mentioned a moment ago that membership is the way we represent Christ well it's also the context in which we love one another.

### Slide 28: Membership helps us lead.

#### 5) MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH HELPS CHRISTIAN LEADERS LEAD.

- a. Again, this goes back to the **Hebrews 13:17** passage,

- i. **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.
- b. but formal membership lets Christian leaders [**at FBC, this is Pastor Jacob, Pastor Mike, the Spiritual leadership team/ ELDERS, and myself**] know which Christians on Planet Earth they will “give an account” for [**Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2**].
- c. Then, we need to have a formal process to formalize the relationship.
  - i. Without this formal process, the elders, don’t know
    1. Who’s in or Who’s out.
    2. Who’s passing through
    3. Who’s dating

The biblical command is not “membership.”

The biblical command is **submitting, serving, giving, not forgetting to meet regularly**.

When I say that church membership is biblical, I am referring to:

- That you **regularly attend** a particular church
- That you **regularly give** to that particular church – time, talents & money
- That you **serve regularly** in the ministries of that particular church
- That you are **accountable** to the members of that particular church
- And that you **submit to the teaching and leadership** of the elders of that particular church.

You’ll notice that I said particular-

- That you are growing in discipleship & sanctification with a particular group of people
- That you aren’t “dating” various churches.

That’s because the life of a Christian should **exist “embedded” in a particular church**.

And membership is sort of the “short-hand” way of describing all of those particular functions that we just mentioned:

- Attending
- Giving
- Serving
- Accountable
- And submitting

So, if someone were to come to FBC regularly – God brought you and your family here –

- You attend regularly
- You give regularly
- You serve in various capacities
- You've joined a Community Group
- BASICALLY, THIS IS THE CHURCH YOU WANT TO DO LIFE WITH...

And, membership is that way to let your YES be a YES.

Make sense?

### [Slide 29: Church discipline]

#### 6) MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH ENABLES CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

- a. Church discipline is rooted in Scripture and is provided for **correction** and **reconciliation** in the local church.

It has been my experience that very few churches still practice church discipline.

**We sat here several months ago and had a conversation about this topic on a Sunday night** – and the question that was asked was, “Do we OR have we ever utilized church discipline?”

**NOT ALWAYS EXCOMMUNICATION – BUT ALWAYS WHAT OUR MIND GOES TO.**

**My question out of this text is simple: How can you kick someone “out” if there isn’t an “in”?**

- Meaning if there is no local commitment to a covenant community of faith, then how do you remove someone from that community of faith? Church discipline won't work if local church membership doesn't exist.

**Any questions?**

**00:29 / 0:05**

**[Slide 30: END OF PART 1]**

## **End of Part 1**

### **So, What's Next?**

In the upcoming five sessions, our intention is to reveal to you the profound purpose God has designed for each of us. As you progress through these sessions, we sincerely hope that you will come to recognize the incredible plans God has in store for you, both within yourself and in service to His glorious Kingdom by being a member at FBC Portland.

By realizing the extent of His calling, you will inevitably find the desire to step away from the sidelines and become an integral part of our FBC Portland family. Taking up membership signifies your commitment to build up His church and to actively participate in God's work here, allowing us the privilege of caring for you and your loved ones.

Becoming a church member at FBC provides an exceptional platform for you to employ your unique gifts and make a genuine impact, not only within our congregation but also in our wider community.

For the next five [5] sessions, we'll begin to talk about aspects that are critical to understanding how Membership Matters at FBC Portland.

They are:

- **Session 2 – Discover FBC:** *In session 2*, we will spend some time learning about how the church developed and moved to Portland, TN. You will learn about: history of the church & history of FBC Portland; what our affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention represents; and, meet our church leadership.
- **Session 3 – Glorify God:** *In session 3*, you will discover more about what FBC Portland believes; our mission statement; our statement of faith; our constitution and bylaws; and, how we worship God together.
- **Session 4 – Grow in Community:** *In session 4*, you will learn about the importance of biblical community. During this time, you will learn more about Community Groups @ FBC as well as FBC's new CORE initiative designed to grow disciples of Jesus Christ to grow in their faith. We'll also give you some easy next steps to help you find community with other believers at FBC Portland.
- **Session 5 – Equipped to Serve:** *In session 5*, you will learn about the importance of recognizing your unique spiritual gift and then how to incorporate that gift to build

up the local church at FBC Portland. Paul compares the body of believers at the church to a human body. Just as a human body cannot operate in full function if it is missing a body part, the church cannot operate in full function if the members of the body are not fulfilling necessary roles. In addition to learning your spiritual gift, you will have the opportunity to learn about the ministries at FBC Portland and discover how you can meet the needs of our church body.

- **And, Session 6 – Engage the World:** In our last session, we will spend time discussing practical opportunities for you to make a difference in our church, in our community & state, across the nation, and even around the globe. You will learn evangelism techniques like "The Four," recognize who your One is, intentionally pray for others, share your faith with those around you, and live a life on a mission. We believe you will be blown away by how God wants to use you to grow His Kingdom, and the potential ways in which your unique gifts and efforts can have a profound impact.

**Any questions?**