

“Church Membership: Marriage or McDonalds?”
Ephesians 5:20

³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Ephesians 5:30 (NKJV)

I. *If we are true Christians, we are already members, through a covenant relationship, of Christ’s body –*

1. *True Christians know God and our whole hearted in their relationship to Him -*

⁷ Then I will give them a heart to **know Me**, that I am the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart. Jeremiah 24:7

A. *This relationship is specifically identified in Scripture as a covenant relationship –*

³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:33

When we speak of “covenant” we are speaking of “vows” / “promises” – Marriage is a covenant because two people are taking “vows” and making promises to each other.

B. *God’s covenant with Abraham is an early example of “I will be your God / you will be my people” covenant –*

⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Genesis 17:7

C. *We see this theme repeated throughout Scripture, especially as it nears its fulfilment in Jesus Christ -*

³⁸ They shall be My people, and I will be their God; Jeremiah 32:38

²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. Ezekiel 11:20

¹¹ that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God,” says the Lord GOD.’ ” Ezekiel 14:11

²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. Ezekiel 37:23

²⁷ My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Ezekiel 37:27

⁸ I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.’ Zechariah 8:8

¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16

2. This covenant reaches its culmination with Christ’s marriage to His blood bought bride the church –

21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:1-3

II. Why local church membership?

¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19-22

1. Regular church attendance is vitally important to your spiritual health and walk with God, vowed membership makes you accountable –

²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*. ²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay*,” says the Lord. And again, “*The LORD will judge His people*.” ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:24–31 (NKJV)

2. Just as we need God, we also need each other –

¹² But Moses’ hands became heavy; so, they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. Exodus 17:12

A. This is where Christian friendship comes in – a DAILY, or at least regular THING ...

¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:13

B. Being members of Christ means we are also members in connection with one another –

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 1 Corinthians 12:27

C. Because the love of Christ is best shown with real local commitment -

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

III. What are the membership vows? What do they mean?

1. *Do you acknowledge yourself to be a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving his displeasure, and without hope, except through his sovereign mercy?*

³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Luke 5:32

2. *Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and trust Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel?*

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17

3. *Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes a follower of Christ?*

⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. 1 John 2:6 (NKJV)

4. *Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?*

How do we support the church?

- A. *Financially, non-members are not required, even with members we are not coming after YOU!*
- B. *With regular attendance.*
- C. *By serving according to God’s gift and grace –*

⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Romans 12:5-8

5. *Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to strive for its purity and peace?*

- *Do you realize you vowed obedience in Christ to the leaders of this church?*

- *Do you realize that if you do something wrong, especially if it is scandalously wrong, you have vowed to submit to the discipline of the church?*

**“27-1. Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare. The term has two senses: a. the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts; b. the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial process.” Presbyterian Church in America
Book of Church Order**

- *Do you realize we have a Book of Church Order? Do you understand you are submitting to elders (plural) and not any individual elder? There are rules for elders to obey too!*

- *Do you realize this is all designed and organized to help you on your way to Heaven, as God disciplines His children –*

⁷ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ⁸ But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:7-11

6. *About the membership vows in general, I want you to notice they do not go into great detail about Christian doctrine –*

¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

You may ask why?

- A. *Because in the Presbyterian Church in America, we do not count ourselves the only true church. Other denominations may differ with us on doctrinal issues and still be true Christians.*

- B. *We do not require of new-born Christians a full knowledge of God's Word, equal to that of a Pastor or elder –*

² as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 1 Peter 2:2

- C. *However, because we strive to be Biblical in our teachings and also open about what we believe, in contrast to another part of Christ's body, we have expressions of what our church believes / how it interprets Scripture in what are called the Westminster Standards: The Westminster Confession of Faith; and the Shorter and Larger Catechism.*

These are very detailed documents in comparison with other church's statements of faith.

- *Membership in a P.C.A. church does not require a full understanding or agreement with these documents.*
- *However, leadership in the P.C.A. are required to understand and agree with these.*

The fact that the P.C.A. has a Book of Church Order and refers to other documents, other than the Bible bothers some people. We do not count these documents equal to Scripture. However, we are the organized, rather than the unorganized church. This helps us keep the command of 1 Corinthians 14:40 – ⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order. 1 Corinthians 14:40

IV. *The Lord's Supper, one of four Biblical Covenant signs: Circumcision, The Passover, Baptism & The Lord's Supper all four signs point to Jesus Christ our Covenant Keeper – 2 Corinthians 1:19-20*

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:19–20 (NKJV)

Arnold A. Brevick