

First Baptist Church
Church Membership Study & Discussion

SESSION 2: Why is church membership important? Who makes up the church? How should the church function?

Why is church membership important?

A church is a gathering: It's people who assemble together on a regular basis. A church is never less than that. But a church is so much more than this.

We will reason from the Scriptures that believers in a local area are **identified** as a gathering, they form a **partnership** in the Gospel, are **unified** & bound together in Christ, and they communicate this by **a commitment**.

Acts 5:12-13 says that the Jerusalem church was “all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.”

They were identified specifically as a gathering and committed to Christ & each other.

Acts 6:2 says that “the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples.”

They knew when they were all present and accounted for.

1 Corinthians 5: A man was to be removed from the church for unrepentant immorality, and Paul's instructions say that **“When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man** to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor. 5:4–5).

Note: When you are assembled, In the name of and with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to deal with the member who was living in constant unrepentant sin, and to remove him from the gathering with restoration being the goal.

A church has a **definite identity** and a clear understanding of **who is** and **who is not** a part of that church.

Churches celebrate the Lord's Supper & Baptism: **The Lord's Supper** commemorates His death for our sins and is a memorial for believers. Believers are encouraged to look at backward to the cross, upward to their resurrected Savior, inward for God to reveal sin, and forward to Christ's second coming (Matthew 28:19, 20; **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**).

Note The phrase “come together” (vv. 17, 18, 20, 33, 34).

What is the church to do when they come together for the Lord's Supper?

Believer's Baptism: identifies the individual believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Baptism means **to immerse** in water, and **identifies** the believer with the death, burial, & resurrection of Jesus Christ the Lord. The new believer is “buried in a water” and raised up in public display of his trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, (Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 8:36, 38, 39; John 3:23; Matthew 3:16; Colossians 2:12; Matthew 28:18–20).

Who then makes up a church? Local church membership is limited to born-again believers in Jesus Christ the Lord who give a sound testimony of personal faith in Christ and openly identify themselves with Him **in believer's baptism**, (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 4:3).

A few important truths for every believer: they have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Are equipped and expected to intercede for others. Responsible to understand & obey the Word of God. Encouraged to keep unity, be edified & encouraged, do the work of the ministry, and edify others.

How should a church function? The next determining factor is seen in the biblical support for the offices of deacon and pastor, and the independence & self-governing of a local church.

Churches have biblical leadership: 1 Timothy and Titus give us detailed instructions for the role and responsibilities of pastor and deacon.

The pastor is described in three terms pastor throughout the New Testament elder, bishop, or overseer all referring to the same office. The pastor is the under shepherd who tends, cares, guides, directs, oversees, edifies with preaching/teaching, and loves the flock as Christ loves.

He is called to a detailed list of qualifications; he is to be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy, gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; in control of his home and family; not immature, and must have a good testimony with unbelievers, (Acts 20:17-38; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5).

The deacons are called to serve in the local church. These appointed men are expected to characterize godly living and set the example of sacrificial service, (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Churches are independent & self-governing (Colossians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 19, 23). The church and state should be distinct, separate, and independent from one another. The Bible provides outlines for the government and the church's purposes in regard to this matter (Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 13:1-7).

Summary: A church is a gathering of believers in the Jesus Christ that are clearly identified, they form a partnership in the Gospel, are unified & bound together in Christ, they communicate this by a commitment Christ & one another. This includes biblical leadership, biblical teaching & preaching, church discipline, a proper celebration of the Lord's Supper, believers' baptism, evangelism & discipleship, and obedience to the Word of God.

What questions do you have from SESSION 2?

What section was most helpful to you (importance of church membership, who makes up the church, & how should a church function)?

What Scripture or area of this study do you need to pursue further?

SESSION 3: Will include A brief history of the First Baptist Church in Bloomfield, IA. A survey our Statement of Faith, & an encouragement for you write your testimony of salvation, baptism, and why you believe it's important to join a local church.