



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading
Week of
April 3rd -9th



Monday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 29, 30
- ❖ Psalm 66
- ❖ Luke 22

Tuesday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 31, 32
- ❖ Psalm 67
- ❖ Luke 23

Wednesday

- ❖ Deuteronomy 33, 34
- ❖ Psalm 68
- ❖ Luke 24

Thursday

- ❖ Joshua 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 69
- ❖ John 1

Friday

- ❖ Joshua 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 70
- ❖ John 2

Saturday

- ❖ Joshua 5, 6

Sunday

- ❖ Joshua 7, 8

membership MEMBERSHIP



Does Membership Matter? Why Meaningless Membership is Dangerous By Pastor Powers

The leadership of LBC has been bantering back-and-forth different ways in which we can demonstrate that church membership matters. In fact, we have been saying with our tongue in cheek, "Membership has its privileges," obviously borrowing the old American Express motto. The conversation need not stop with discussion of membership privileges, however, as though the church were nothing more than a mere social club; it really is much deeper.

Membership in the local church has to do with submitting to God's authority placed in the people of God gathered - the *ekklesia* of God - the church. The church does have authority on earth. Let me demonstrate.

Jesus says to Peter in Matthew 16:18b-19:

"I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth *will have been bound in heaven*, and whatever you loose on earth *will have been loosed in heaven*" (*my translation*).

We all know that the guy with the keys has the authority. The guy with the keys is the one who has been entrusted with the building. The authority for granting / forbidding entry and passage rests on his shoulders. This is the point Jesus makes here regarding the church. The church has the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

There is a massively important implication here as to the responsibility of the church, then: **the church has the role of providing affirmation to one's profession of faith.** If the church affirms one's profession

of faith it bids them entrance into its gates. But, there is something more fundamental going on at the same time. When the church affirms one's profession and bids entry into the church, there is a simultaneous entry granted into heaven itself: "...whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven." In other words, the one only references the other. The symbolism points to the substance. To be allowed into the membership of a church means to have been granted entry into heaven.

What a massive responsibility we have. Membership matters because it is the means by which the church can hear and affirm your profession of faith in Christ. This is a privilege to members! Bidding you a, "Come and Welcome" is supposed to be supremely encouraging.

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Does Membership Matter?

Why Meaningless Membership is Dangerous

By Pastor Powers

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There are implications here for our process of receiving members.

1. Before we grant entrance, we must be sure that a person understands the fundamentals of the gospel and the basis for their forgiveness and reconciliation before God.

2. Before we grant entrance, we must be sure that a person understands and affirms the basic and fundamental doctrines of the Bible as summarized in a *Confession of Faith*. Therefore, the confession should be non-negotiable truths required of all believers. (Negotiable teachings that distinguish us from other denomination, for example, will be embodied in a *Statement of Faith*.)¹

Now, in order to demonstrate that this is the right and proper understanding of Jesus' words to Peter, notice what Matthew records in 18:17-18 when discussing church discipline:

"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.¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth *will have been bound* in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth *will have been loosed* in heaven" (*my translation*).

You see, even the flip-side is true. Should an individual cease to manifest a profession of faith based upon an unrepentant lifestyle, the church is responsible for "loosing" that individual. When the church declares that it can no longer regard a person as a believer, it may be a symbol of the substantive verdict already given in heaven. (I say, "may be a symbol" because Paul later demonstrates that though the church makes a declaration, the true believer will return!). The church has the obvious role of holding its members accountable to Christ and His church. The church is a gathering of committed followers of Christ. They are covenanted to him by the blood of the New Covenant and they are committed to being held accountable beneath the authority of the church. Therefore, the covenanting of the church should matter because the discipline of the church is a privilege to members!

There is another

implication, then for our reception of members: we must be sure that each one coming into the church desires to be held accountable, to hold accountable and to submit to the church's authority. We want committed and faithful members who will adhere to our *Membership Covenant*.²

When all is said and done, membership matters because the privileges come to us as we submit to the authority of the local church. On the other hand, meaningless membership is dangerous. Mark Dever³ provides four reasons as to why it is dangerous:

"Meaningless membership refers to the common practice of neglecting to tie church membership to specific responsibilities, priorities, expectations, privileges, and sanctions. It is dangerous for the following four reasons:"

Meaningless membership sends a confusing witness to the surrounding community.

When we fail to tie membership to specific obligations, we allow people to become members without them feeling any particular obligation or accountability to live and teach as the church lives

and teaches. The poor behavior of many members in such a low accountability environment often taints the church's corporate witness in the community and confuses unbelievers around us about what it means to be a Christian. It makes the church look grossly hypocritical when an immature or unconverted member sins repeatedly in a publicly known way.

Meaningless membership causes division due to the sin of unconverted members.

When we uncritically allow mere verbal professors to enjoy membership in the local church, such members can become sources of division within the church. The church is a web of mutually sanctifying relationships. One quarrelsome unbeliever can sow many seeds of division by slavery to sins like gossip, anger, lying, and covetousness.

Division is especially likely if the verbal professor of Christianity has natural teaching ability and is able to

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¹ Both of our documents, Confession of Faith and Statement of Faith are available to all those interested. 2006 is a year of transition for LBC, should you have any comments about the contents of these documents before we officially approve them in 2007, please submit them in writing to any of the "Provisional Elders."

² Both the Confession and the Covenant are attached here for your encouragement.

³ This material can be seen in a number of places: 1) the Nine Marks ministry website <http://marks.9marks.org/Mark6/LessonG>. 2) In Mark Dever's book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*

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propound his own views over against those of the church by teaching Sunday school or leading Bible studies with false motives. When this happens, meaningless membership has led to the infiltration of false teachers.

Meaningless membership causes ambiguity regarding the duties of membership.

When we fail to tie church membership to specific duties, new members don't have any concrete understanding of that to which they are committing.

When members do not understand exactly what their responsibilities are, they are left without a practical yardstick by which to faithfully examine their own behavior or to which they can hold their Christian brother or sister accountable.

Meaningless membership leads to the self-deception of irresponsible members.

Church membership is a local church's affirmation that an individual is bearing fruit that evidences repentance. Failing to tie church membership to duty and obligation communicates to the lazy and unconverted that the diligent killing of indwelling sin is unnecessary, and that observable growth in practical holiness is for the few, not for all.

Such failure communicates the church's tacit approval of the idea that a person can be a genuine Christian and anticipate entrance into the Kingdom of God while

It is my prayer that we will become a church where membership matters!

Pastor Powers