



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

*session four*

# The Mission of a Member

*Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.*

## PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

Acquaint the group with their role as potential members of your church.

---

## MATERIALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Leader's guide
- Participant's guides (one per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Post-it notes
- Dry erase board or chart paper and markers
- PowerPoint presentation and equipment for display
- Members from the church to give brief testimonies of ministry experiences (optional)
- Handout on next steps to become a member (optional)

## SESSION OUTLINE

---

### Gather

1. Beginning Points
2. Discussion starter
3. Why join a church?

### Instruct & Interact

1. Reasons for joining the church
2. What does it mean to be a member?

### Integrate

1. Group reflection and discussion
2. Decision to become a member
3. Closing

**Going Deeper**

# Gather

---

## BEGINNING POINTS

- **Welcome participants back** to *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.*
- **EXPLAIN: The objective for this session** is to acquaint the group with their role as potential members of our church.
- **Pray**

## DISCUSSION STARTER

**Choose from one of the following options:**

**OPTION 1:** Hand out Post-it notes, and ask participants to write down the name of a person or organization they are committed to on each note. Ask them to share the reasons behind their commitments either in pairs or as a group.

**OPTION 2:** Ask participants to pull out every card from their wallets or identify every app on their phone that represents membership in something. Examples may be a library card, a gym card, an Amazon Prime membership, a frequent flier program, and so on. Note where there are commonalities within the group, or do some fun “contests” such as who has the oldest “member since” recognition, who has the longest expired card still in their possession, and so on.

## WHY JOIN A CHURCH?

**EXPLAIN:** Sometimes we hear that people no longer like to commit to joining groups or organizations. Yet this exercise just showed us that isn't true. When people understand why commitment is important, they are willing to invest. Today we will explore what it means to commit to becoming a church member.

If you are a follower of Christ, one spiritual reality the Bible teaches is that you are already a member of God's universal Church. You are joined right now to every other believer around the world by the common relationship we share with Christ. When we join God's family, we are organically joined to all other brothers and sisters who have also

**As a follower  
of Christ, you  
are already a  
member of God's  
universal Church**

experienced the grace of Christ. We become brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of location, culture, class, or gender.

So why bother joining a specific local church? What are some reasons to become a member? (*Allow time for answers.*)

## *Instruct and Interact*

### REASONS FOR JOINING THE CHURCH

**EXPLAIN:** You have already identified many reasons for joining a local church. Commitment and rootedness to a local church can radically transform us as we go deeper in Christ and further in mission together. In Scripture we see several reasons to join the church:

- **Joining the church honors Christ.** Taking this step is a tangible expression of a spiritual reality. It helps us make public declaration of a spiritual truth about our identification with Christ and other believers. Christ loved the Church and gave his life for it. As we commit to the Church, we join Christ in that commitment. (MARK 10:45; LUKE 24:46-47; HEBREWS 10:25; COLOSSIANS 2:19)
- **Joining the church is missional.** Quite simply, we are better together. We can accomplish more by joining with others than we would ever be able to accomplish on our own. (MATTHEW 28:18-20; ROMANS 12:5-8; ACTS 11:19-26; EPHESIANS 2:10)
- **Joining the church fosters spiritual growth.** Making this commitment is part of the progression of faith. First, we commit to Christ, and as part of that commitment we further commit to Christ's family. The New Testament contains 39 "one another" commands about how to live life as brothers and sisters. We cannot reasonably fulfill those commands without making a commitment to a specific group of people. (JOHN 13:34-35; 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-22; EPHESIANS 4:15-16)
- **Joining the church is ethical.** Membership is inferred from the New Testament. For example, the Apostle Paul was so broken-hearted about the persistent, flaunting, egregious, and immoral behavior of one member of the Corinthian church that he instructed the members to expel him. (*You can't be expelled from something of which you are not an initiated member.*) Membership is also inferred in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy where some leaders could choose others to minister, or restrict the ministry of others. (ACTS 2:44-47; EPHESIANS 4:11-13; EPHESIANS 5:19-20)

**Membership is a commitment to grow deeper in Christ and go further in mission together as the church.**

- **Joining the church is counter-cultural.** When we make this choice, we swim against the current of consumer religion in which people feel the freedom to move from church to church, with no commitment to a specific congregation. Yet hopping from church to church curtails our growth and prevents the cultivation of deep roots. A different kind of growth occurs through perseverance. Public commitments cause us to review the depth of bonds even in tough times.

(1 CORINTHIANS 12:22-26; GALATIANS 6:2; PHILIPPIANS 1:29-30)

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER?

**EXPLAIN:** Membership in the church is sometimes described as the desire to grow as Christ's disciple, be a part of God's kingdom, and fulfill the will of God. Let's look at each of these descriptors individually.

### Growing as Christ's disciples

**EXPLAIN:** In the Evangelical Covenant Church we are characterized by four distinctives by which we go deeper in Christ and further in mission together: biblical, devotional, connectional, and missional. These commitments remind us how we can grow.

**LEADER TIP:** Elaborate on these and any other distinctives that you may wish to emphasize, explaining how they are lived out in your church.

**EXPLAIN:** Our commitment is to help you go deeper in Christ and further in mission together as a member of our church family.

- **As a biblical family,** we seek to help you understand the Bible so you can apply it as the frame of reference for all of life.
- **As a devotional family,** we seek to help you go deeper in Christ—not just when we are physically together, but also by empowering you to become attentive and responsive to God's presence in all areas of life.
- **As a connectional family,** we seek to help you find your way into meaningful relationships that will both encourage you and challenge you.
- **As a missional family,** we seek to help you discover God's purposes for your life and equip you to utilize your unique gifts for significant service with God for the world.

**Ask the following reflection questions:**

- How have you already experienced growth in these four areas during your time in this church community?
- How can we best empower you to grow further in each of these areas?

**Being a Part of God's Kingdom**

**EXPLAIN:** As we mentioned earlier, if you are a follower of Christ, one spiritual reality the Bible teaches is that you are already a member of God's universal Church, or God's kingdom. Jesus often speaks of the kingdom; in fact, he included it in the Lord's Prayer when he was teaching the disciples how to pray: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (MATTHEW 6:10).

**God's kingdom is not like any earthly kingdom. It is not established by force. It does not have physical boundaries. It will not fall and crumble, but will last forever. As Jesus first ministered with his disciples in Galilee, he demonstrated what God's kingdom is all about. He revealed a kingdom centered in a loving relationship with God and each other.**

Those who follow Jesus live in two worlds—the kingdom of God and this world. We are commanded to be "in the world" to bring the good news of Jesus to others, but not to be "of the world," caving into the evil that exists in the world. Believers are disciples and ambassadors of God's kingdom. We are called to be like Jesus, to spend time with God in prayer, and to participate in God's kingdom in the world by battling hate with love, apathy with care and concern, injustice with justice, and despair with the hope in Jesus. We are called to pray for our enemies, care for the sick, reach out to those in need, and be a friend to the outcast.

**Ask the following reflection question:**

- How can being a member of the church help us live into the kingdom together and help us to be the kind of disciples Christ calls us to be?

**It takes a lifetime  
of growing. As  
Christ's disciples, we  
are committed to  
help one another  
in this journey.**

### Seeking to fulfill the will of God

**EXPLAIN:** As citizens of God's kingdom, we pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. As growing disciples of Christ, we seek to fulfill the will of God in the world. By God's grace we come to faith, and by the Holy Spirit we receive the ability to fulfill God's will. As a church member, you join with all other members in seeking to fulfill the will of God.

**LEADER TIP:** Elaborate on these and any others that you may wish to emphasize or invite other members of your congregation to share.

#### Together we:

1. **Strive for spiritual health as a congregation by:**
  - a. being committed to grow deeper in Christ personally
  - b. reflecting the character and holiness of Christ  
(COLOSSIANS 3:1-17)
  - c. praying for the church regularly
  - d. faithfully participating in the life of the church
  - e. promoting unity
  - f. supporting the spiritual growth and personal care of others
  - g. worshiping together
2. **Serve together in ministry as a congregation by:**
  - a. discovering and using our spiritual gifts
  - b. engaging in discipleship opportunities that help us  
be more faithful and fruitful in our service to God
  - c. caring for one another
3. **Support the mission of our congregation by:**
  - a. giving regularly of our finances, time, and talent
  - b. actively participating in congregational decision-making
  - c. inviting non-churched friends to church
  - d. being externally focused in seeking opportunities for  
evangelism and compassion, mercy, and justice to the  
lost and hurting in our community and beyond

**EXPLAIN:** Growing as Christ's disciples, and helping to fulfill God's will in the world is something we are all growing into, from the youngest to the oldest person in the church. It takes a lifetime of growing and we are committed to help one another in this journey.

# Integrate

---

## GROUP REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

### Ask the following discussion questions:

1. There are many ways that we seek to fulfill God's will. Which are you most drawn to?
2. What are your thoughts about this lifelong journey and the ways in which we minister together to fulfill God's will?
3. Does today's session raise any particular questions, concerns, or other feelings for you?

## DECISION TO BECOME A MEMBER

### Next steps toward becoming a member

Outline the membership process from this point on, including

- Membership application
- Application review process
- Transfer of membership from another congregation
- Congregational recognition, etc.

### If you decide not to become a member

**EXPLAIN:** After praying about this decision, you may decide that now is not the time for you to formally join as a member. That is perfectly okay. We want you to know about this church, we want you to make the best decision as God leads you. Although you may not be able to formally vote in the church, you will have opportunity to belong and be involved in our common life together. Your presence matters as we move into the future, and we look forward to having you join us with each of your unique gifts and talents.

## CLOSING

**OPTIONAL:** Ask a current member of the church speak briefly to the group (*under five minutes*) on what the church has meant to him or her. Pray for that member.



**Ask the following discussion questions:**

- What are your closing thoughts as we end this discussion?
- Would any of you be willing to share about what this church has meant to you so far and what you hope to experience in the future?

**OPTIONAL:** Create a video using the stories and experiences of the class to introduce new members to the congregation when they are brought to membership. Include the reflections on the class from those who are choosing not to become members at this time, and include the faith testimonies of those who are becoming members.

**Close the class** by thanking everyone for their participation, and express your hope for a long and fruitful relationship together. Pray for God's direction in their lives.

**Remind your group** of the additional questions which are available in the "Going Deeper" section at the end of this session for those who want to reflect further on their role in the working out of their mission as a member.

## *Going Deeper*

---

### NEXT STEPS

**During this session, we discussed the mission of a member. Set aside time this week to review your church's membership process, and ask God to help you discern your next steps.**

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

- Pursue membership by taking the next step in the membership process.
- Talk with a church leader about questions or concerns you have.
- Research the Evangelical Covenant Church further.
- Discern new ways to go deeper in Christ and further in mission with our community.
- Join a small group.
- Serve in a ministry.



The Evangelical Covenant Church

MAKE & DEEPEN DISCIPLES

**The purpose of *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.* resource is to identify what it means for individuals to become members of an Evangelical Covenant Church. Membership is a commitment to grow deeper in Christ and further in mission together.**

***The Meaning of Membership* covers:**

**SESSION ONE:** The Mission of God

**SESSION TWO:** The Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church

**SESSION THREE:** The Mission of Our Church

**SESSION FOUR:** The Mission of a Member

It is our prayer that together we will grow deeper in Christ and further in mission. Thank you for taking the time to explore what it means to be a part of the Evangelical Covenant Church.

**[CovChurch.org/Membership](https://CovChurch.org/Membership)**