



THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

session one

The Mission of God

Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.

PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION

To help participants understand the work of God in the world,
with a focus on the mission of God reaching to each individual.

OBJECTIVES FOR THIS SESSION

- Provide an overview of the work of God in the world
- Introduce, build, and deepen relationships
- Acquaint participants with the mission of God for each person and for the church
- Begin the process of discovering membership within your congregation

MATERIALS FOR THIS SESSION

- Leader's guide
- Participant's guides (one per person)
- Pens or pencils
- Dry erase board or chart paper and markers
- PowerPoint presentation and equipment for display

SESSION OUTLINE

Gather

- Beginning Points
- Why Membership?
- One-on-one Introductions

Instruct & Interact

- God's Story: God's Mission to You

Integrate

- Reflecting on God's Story: God's Mission to You
- The X-Factor

Going Deeper

- Going Deeper in Christ and Further in Mission Together

Gather

#1 | BEGINNING POINTS

Introduction

- Welcome participants to *The Meaning of Membership: Deeper in Christ. Further in Mission. Together.*
- Introduce yourself.
- **Pray** for God's blessing as you begin this journey together.
- Pass out participant's guides.

Purpose of *The Meaning of Membership*

- Take an in-depth look at our congregation
- Underscore our commitment to God's mission in the world
- Introduce our denominational family
- Build and deepen friendships
- Explore what it means to be a member
- Outline the process to become a member

Format of *The Meaning of Membership*

EXPLAIN: Our church is all about mission. We are committed to purposefully pursuing the priorities of God. Together we will examine four intersecting dimensions of that mission: the mission of God; the mission of the denomination to which we belong, the Evangelical Covenant Church; the mission of our local church; and the mission of individual members of our church. We will explore these four topics during four one-hour sessions [or one session].

LEADER TIP: Edit the timeline to fit your context.

EXPLAIN:

- In "The Mission of God," we will explore our understanding of God's story and God's mission in the world through you.

**Our church is all
about mission.**

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

- In “The Mission of the Evangelical Covenant Church,” we will examine the values, mission, and ministry of our denominational family.
- In “The Mission of Our Church,” we will explore how we are seeking to pursue God’s priorities as a local church body. We will also introduce you to our history and give you a behind-the-scenes look at how we are organized.
- In “The Mission of a Member,” we will look at our church’s commitment to you and the expectations we have for those committed to our church.

Objectives for this Session

EXPLAIN: The objectives for this session are to:

- Provide an overview of the work of God in the world
- Introduce, build, and deepen relationships
- Explore the story of God’s mission to you and God’s mission through you
- Begin the process of discovering membership at our church.

#2 | WHY MEMBERSHIP?

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

We know that Christ loves the church. As we commit to our local church body, we join Christ in that commitment, which roots us in transformative ways within the family of God.

We are a people who are “in it together,” counting on God and each other to join together to pursue God’s mission in the world. As we seek to advance the mission of God, we know we are better together. We can accomplish far more by joining together than we could ever do on our own.

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.

#3 | ONE-ON-ONE INTRODUCTIONS

Divide the class into groups of two or three.

- Ask each group to discuss the following questions:
 1. How did you begin attending this church?
 2. What is one question you would like to see answered during our time together?
- Give the groups a few minutes to discuss, then invite them back to share with the larger group the answers that their partner(s) gave.

LEADER TIP: Write down the questions each person would like answered. Keep the list for future reference to help you remember to answer the questions as the subjects come up.

- Assure participants that their questions will be addressed either within your sessions or outside of the meetings.

Instruct and Interact

#1 | GOD'S STORY: GOD'S MISSION TO YOU

Lenses help us to see everything better. Perhaps the most important lens we need to understand our own story is the lens of God's story—the story which includes all other stories, including yours and mine. God's story is the overarching storyline that encompasses everything from the beginning of creation to its culmination, from Genesis to Revelation.

The four chapters of God's story reveal God's mission to us:

1. CREATION (GENESIS 1-2). God, who is love itself, created humanity in order to grow his family of love. God's desire was to enjoy the goodness and beauty of life and all creation together with us.

- "God is love" (1 JOHN 4:16).
- "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (GENESIS 1:31).

2. FALL (GENESIS 3). Unfortunately, all creation was soon damaged by evil. We now live in a broken world and we ache for a better world. A better world did exist before humanity turned from God and God's ways to follow their own ways. This turning away from God is called

**We now live in
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“sin,” and the ultimate outcome of sin is disconnection, decay, and death.

- “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (ROMANS 3:23).
- “For the wages of sin is death” (ROMANS 6:23).

3. REDEMPTION (GENESIS 3 - REVELATION 20). Although all is broken, all is not lost! The good news is that Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection make our redemption possible. To “redeem” means to save or to restore. Jesus, who is the Son of God, sacrificed his life in order to save us and permanently restore our relationship with God, with one another, and with all creation. God’s purposes are big and you have a part to play. God is sending us near and far to be disciples who make disciples. Together we are sent on God’s mission to bring healing and flourishing to the world in Jesus’s power and authority.

- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (JOHN 3:16).
- “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 JOHN 4:10).
- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations” (MATTHEW 28:19).

4. NEW CREATION (REVELATION 21-22). Ultimately God will restore all things through a renewal of heaven and earth. Those who have been restored through Jesus Christ will finally flourish in perfect love with God, community, and creation, just as God always intended.

- “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death” or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (REVELATION 21:3-4).

#2 | REFLECTING ON GOD'S STORY: GOD'S MISSION TO YOU

- Give participants a few minutes to reflect on the questions below. Then ask them to share their thoughts in groups of two or three. Remind participants that it's okay to not to answer every question.

1. How have you experienced the goodness of creation and the brokenness of creation?
2. How have you already experienced God's redeeming love through the church?
3. How does God's mission of restoration give you hope for people and our planet?
4. How might God be calling you to respond to his story?

As you hear God's story perhaps you are aware you have not yet embraced God's mission of love to you through Jesus Christ.

You can become a follower of Jesus and engage in his mission to restore the world with his community and with the help of the Holy Spirit. You can begin to follow Jesus today through a simple prayer, using your own words or prayer like this:

Jesus, I believe that your death and resurrection broke the cycle of brokenness in the world and in me. I acknowledge my responsibility in contributing to the damage in the world. I receive your forgiveness. I choose to follow you and to let you be my leader. I receive your Spirit.

—PRAYER ADAPTED FROM INTERVARSITY'S THE BIG STORY APP

If anyone here would like to pray this together with me, please join me in silent prayer while I say the prayer again.

LEADER TIP: Suggest that everyone bow their heads together as you pray this prayer.

If you have received Jesus Christ today for the first time, please let us know so that we can support you in this new journey!

God is sending us near and far to be disciples who make disciples.

Ask someone to read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 and Matthew 28:16-20.

EXPLAIN: God's mission extends to you, but it extends beyond you as well. God's mission has a ripple effect! We are first reconciled to God, then reconciled to one another in community. The church is a community of believers that has been mobilized to extend God's reconciling mission in word and action in the world. We are now called to heal the world with God and to become disciples who make disciples.

The X-Factor: Keep this Image in Mind

EXPLAIN: Here is an image that can help us remember both God's mission to you and God's mission through you. Koine Greek is the language of the New Testament. The Greek letter *chi* looks like the English letter "X". *Chi* is the first letter for the Greek spelling of Christ, so it became the one-letter abbreviation for Christ. It is also a visual image for the mission of God.

Draw the top half of the letter *chi*, "X"

EXPLAIN: The top part of the "X" reminds us that the God of the universe, in all his power, majesty, and vastness (the vast open portion at the very top) nevertheless pinpoints his love and attention on us.

Draw the bottom half of the letter *chi*, "X" to complete the letter.

EXPLAIN: From this point on, we are reminded by the bottom half of the *chi*, that we join God (the center point) in his expansive mission to the world (the lower opening).

The two halves of the X combine to remind us of the rhythm of faith: God has a mission both to us and through us.

#3 | THE X-FACTOR



Going Deeper

CLOSING

EXPLAIN: God has a mission in this world, and that mission includes you. God loves you and longs to be in relationship with you. Throughout the rest of our time together, keep that in mind, wherever you are on your spiritual journey.

- If you sense that you are at a place where you desire to embrace God's love for you for the first time, I encourage you to talk with me, to help you begin following Jesus.

GOING DEEPER IN CHRIST AND FURTHER IN MISSION TOGETHER

In the Evangelical Covenant Church, we are characterized by four commitments by which we go deeper in Christ and further in mission together. As a denominational family, we are **biblical, devotional, connectional,** and **missional.** These four commitments outline how we participate in God's mission to us and through us.

Take five minutes to consider how you will deepen your commitments in the following areas, so that we might grow deeper in Christ and further in mission together.

- **Biblical**—Growing in our knowledge of God through Bible engagement. *How is God's word influencing your life?*
- **Devotional**—When we open God's word it isn't just to know about God, but rather to be in relationship with God through the work of the Spirit. *What spiritual practices help you go deeper in Christ in this season of your life?*
- **Connectional**—We are created for relationship with God and one another. We are connectional people. We are all the church together—children, youth, adults, women and men, persons of all ethnicities, nationalities, social standing and ability. All are invited and called by God to be the church. *How will you embrace being better together within the local church? How will you go deeper in Christ and further in mission together?*
- **Missional**—The church exists for God's mission. As missional people we are called to be about God's priorities in the world in both word and deed, reaching the lost and helping the hurting. We are called to share the love of God and to grow the family of God by becoming disciples who make disciples. *What is your next step in going further in mission with God?*

You may want to set apart additional time this week to reflect on these questions.



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