

# LETTER FROM THE PASTOR

MAY 2024

## Why Church Membership?

BY ERIK RAYMOND – THE GOSPEL COALITION

### 1. Church Membership is Biblical.

Right after saying church membership is biblical I will concede that the Bible does not tell us to have a formalized membership nor implement a church covenant. However, the concept of membership is everywhere. Like Mark Dever says, “It is everywhere implied.”

For example, Paul instructs Titus to appoint elders in every city (Ch. 1) to lead, feed and protect those among them. In [Phil. 1:1](#) he writes to the elders and deacons among the saints in Philippi. In [1 Pet. 5](#) there is a charge to the elders to shepherd the flock of God that The Lord has given them charge of. These are just examples of a local community that is somehow identifiable and organized.

Further, Jesus’ plan for church purity in [Matthew 18:15ff](#) necessitates some type of understanding and application of membership. In [1 Cor. 5](#) Paul instructs the church to have the one who is persistent in sin put out of the church. How can you have someone put out of the church if you do not know who is in the church?

Like the doctrine of the Trinity which is never articulated but always implied and reinforced, church membership is biblical.

### 2. Church Membership is Historical.

Simply put, church membership has been practiced throughout church history. This does not make or break the argument but it does help to substantiate that this is what Christians have been doing. It is not a new phenomenon.

### **3. Church Membership is Practical.**

Christians are called to live in community with mutual accountability and love ([Heb. 3:13](#); [Eph. 4:11-16](#); etc.). Furthermore, elders (pastors) are called to lead, feed and protect the flock spiritually ([1 Pet. 5:1-3](#)). What's more, pastors are going to give an account for their people ([Heb. 13:17](#)). As someone who sits in that chair and trembles under the weight of this passage, I want to know precisely who I am going to give an account for. Church membership helps to clarify who has willingly put themselves into community and under the pastoral care of the church. We know who is a part of the family. This clarifies community and accountability. If we did not have this I'd be counting sheep all night and never sleeping.

The way we do this is to have a membership class and then have membership meetings. During the meeting we have the opportunity to hear the individual's testimony of conversion and interface about their doctrine. We also talk about where and how they are or would like to serve. This setting is extremely helpful in that it helps to ensure that we have regenerate church members and it provides a setting to sync up in terms of our vision for ministry.

### **4. Church Membership is Theological.**

When someone becomes a Christian they are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)). This is the universal church, the body of believers from throughout history. However, our first priority then is to go and unite with the family, the church. What we need to do is identify with the local manifestation of this spiritual body. We need a local church that is a part of the universal church.

Once we do this we come and join the church so that we can live the Christian life together. At conversion we are spiritually united to Christ, receiving all of the blessings of new birth. Then we, out of this union to Christ, join together with other believers to live in community. In other words, church membership is the physical expression of the spiritual reality of new life in Christ. We are partakers of a new identity and a new family that is characterized by holiness. What does that look like? Look at the church. See how the members function. Without church membership Christianity looks like a place that is driven by consumers rather than a community that is identified by and calibrated to the gospel.

## **Conclusion**

I believe, by experience and conviction that church membership is an essential component of clearly establishing, communicating, and sustaining a true gospel community.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS: WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LBC?**

**WHO'S COMING TO DINNER?** – This event takes place Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup>. *Contact Janis Sharp* if you forget where you are supposed to be headed for dinner.

**LADIES BREAKFAST** – Please join us Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup> for our next Ladies Breakfast. The breakfast begins at 9am. All ladies are invited for a time of food, fun and gospel fellowship.

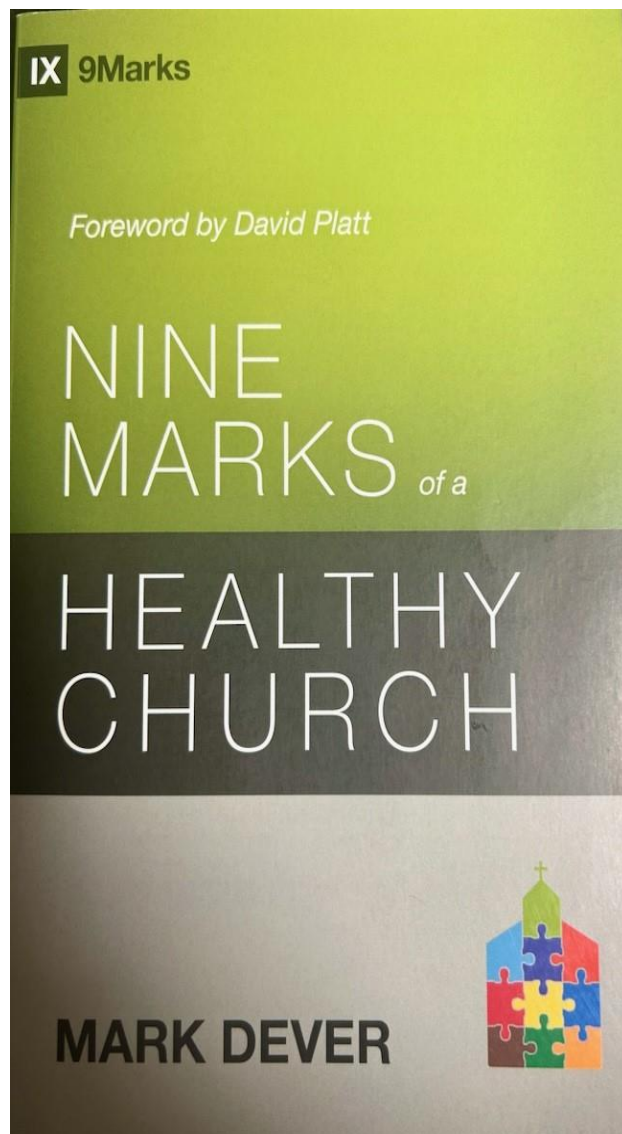
**MEN'S BREAKFAST** – In light of the long weekend, there will NOT be a men's breakfast this month. We will have another one in June before we break for the summer months.

**LADIES BIBLE STUDY** – This study continues to take place on Friday mornings at 9:30am. **Please contact Aprile Dempsey or Janis Sharp for more details.**

**COMMUNITY LADIES DROP IN** – The next drop in takes place May 21. It continues to be held at LBC and takes place from 9:30 to 10:30am. What a wonderful way to get to know ladies from the church, but also the community!

**WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY** – We continue to work through the book of Micah. Please be reminded that sessions are recorded and posted on the church website under the Bible Study heading. **Please note that there will not be a study May 8<sup>th</sup> as Pastor Eric will be away at a conference.**

**BOOK OF THE MONTH** – This month we are featuring Mark Dever’s 9 **Marks of a Healthy Church**. Whether you’re a pastor, ministry leader, or an involved member of your congregation, studying the nine marks of a healthy church will help you cultivate new life and well-being within your own church for God’s glory and the good of his people.



**EVENING SERVICE** – This month’s evening service will take place on May 26th. Please join us as we continue to work through our study of Matthew 24 (Last Day’s Series). As always our service will include singing, scripture reading, and a time of corporate prayer.

**BAPTISM AND MEMBERSHIP CLASSES** – We hope to offer the Baptism class in May, and the Membership classes in June. If you are interested in learning more about these classes, please contact Pastor Eric or one of the elders.

**FOOD BANK SUNDAY** – Please remember that May 26<sup>th</sup> is this month's Food Bank Sunday. Not sure what to bring? A list of items is posted on the Food Bank box at the back of the sanctuary. Cash donations are also gladly welcomed.

**RESOURCES** - Be sure to take advantage of the resource section at the back of the church. This includes material regarding specific life issues, a variety of sermons, as well as the monthly Tabletalk resources.

**SAVE THE DATE** – **ONCE AGAIN LBC WILL BE TAKING PART IN THE BIG GIVE!** This will again include our FREE CAR WASH, BBQ AND YARD SALE. And more! This year's date is June 1<sup>st</sup>. More information about this annual event will be released in the coming weeks. Stay tuned!





