

## **What is Membership?**

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Have you ever heard a professional athlete—say a professional baseball player—thank God after his team wins an important game? I certainly have. And every time I hear those words I think to myself, “Does God really care about the outcome of a baseball game?” The players themselves. Sure. Their souls. No question. But, who wins and loses? I’m not sure. I ask this question for one reason: because we—as members of the local church—are sort of like teammates. I’m sure you’ve all heard the term “teammates in Christ.” While that may sound pretty cheesy, I think its hitting on something important. Let me explain further.

In my previous article, I addressed the question “why membership?” After having examined its importance, the next question that must be addressed is: what does Biblical membership look like? In other words, what are the attributes of a “good” church member? Playing off the analogy outlined above, I think “good” church members function like “great” teammates—who together can transform an ordinary group of people into an amazing team. And just think: if God even cares one iota about the outcome of a baseball game, how much more does care about—and want to bless—the outcome of his “team,” the local church?

Okay, so let’s delve into this a little deeper. What specific qualities make up a “good” church member? Like any good teammate, a member’s first obligation is to himself—meaning that a “good” member seeks, above all, to be a devoted follower of Christ by continually growing in his relationship with the Lord. Thus, “good” church members are people who, among other things, love Jesus, spend time with Him in prayer, read and meditate on the Bible, and evangelize non-believers. In other words, they’re basically people who “take up their cross” and follow Christ daily. After all, without growth in our individual capacity, we will never be able to excel as a corporate body.

Of course, growing with the Lord individually is only a small part of the equation when it comes to our role as church members. Obviously, good church members must also participate in the corporate gathering of believers. After all, at its baseline, that’s what church is. But, what does this participation require? Well, first and foremost, it simply requires the act of showing up! Good church members congregate together regularly. That means consistent attendance at corporate worship and church functions. Of course, this has nothing to do with legalism and no one will be standing at the door making sure you make it to church every Sunday! However, I think it goes without saying that it is hard to really be a part of something if your participation is only half-hearted. You can’t become a great team if your best players are constantly skipping practice!

In addition to simply showing up on Sundays, though, good church members actually participate in “the life” of the church by serving it and, thus, by extension serving one another. Small groups. Set-up crew. Child care. Making coffee. Greeting visitors. Prayer team. There are innumerable opportunities at the Crossings for people to serve. By doing so, we begin to create a servant culture, where others needs are placed ahead of our own and where people who come truly feel valued and blessed.

A broader aspect of this service to the church—I believe—is identifying our own unique spiritual gifts and using them for the good of the body. After all, the word

“member” comes from the word “body.” Arms, legs, feet...they are all “members” of the body and all function in unique ways to help it operate at its optimum capacity. Likewise, the “body of Christ” is full of people with unique talents and spiritual gifts. We, as members, have an obligation to identify those talents so that they can be put to use for the glory of the church. It is only then that we truly begin to operate with one voice.

I think also inherent in this “servant mentality” of the church should be a desire among its people to create a “discipleship culture.” What does that mean? Well, simply put that means people taking the time to care for—and pour into—the spiritual life of their fellow believers. It means mature Christian believers mentoring young Christians. It means people checking their pride at the door so that real transformation can take place. It means members of the local church spending time and energy cultivating and enhancing the lives of other members.

Lastly, I think a good member (and a good teammate) is also a good cheerleader. Good members speak positively and encouragingly about the church and its people. They are constantly seeking to build it up and never to tear it down.

At the end of the day, great teammates on the sports field are hard to find. More often than not, most athletes are too worried about their own individual glory to really become part of something special. I worry that this is happening within our churches. Perhaps we’ve become convinced that being passive “consumers” of church is what this is all about—when, in reality, I think God is calling us to something far greater, to a community of fellow believers who pour into each other’s lives and truly care for—and love—one another.

I truly believe that God desires to bless his local church and wants it to shine like a beacon in the night for the entire world to see. And I think He wants to equip us for this journey. Thus, the only question that remains is: will we step up to the plate and do our part?