

January 28, 2024

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing
Commitment to God's Church

We begin today with Year Two of "God's Good News Story". Our focus this year is on the remainder of the New Testament from Acts to Revelation. Our theme is "***The Church Alive & Growing***". Last week our focus was on The Need for One Another or **COMMUNITY!** Today the key idea is **COMMITMENT!** Let's read our key passage again this week.

Acts 2:42-47 ... ⁴² *And they devoted (committed) themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* ⁴³ *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *And all who believed were together and had all things in common.* ⁴⁵ *And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* ⁴⁶ *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* ⁴⁷ *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

A key word that I want to communicate to you is **COMMITMENT** (devotion, dedication).

WE BECOME WHAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO. If we are to be **THE CHURCH**, the family of God in this world, we must evaluate our level of true commitment.

"Commitment means that certain decisions are made in advance, irrespective of the circumstances: "I will honor Christ, whatever the pain and whatever the cost. I will obey God's word, even when that is the hardest thing to do. I will do what God has called me to do, when it is draining as well as when it is fulfilling." (Collin Smith. Open the Bible.org)

In regard to the church, the structure of the church should not be determined by culture, business practices or even denominational traditions. It should be based upon the truth revealed in God's Word, the Bible

A. **THE CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP**

Acts 2:42 (DSV)... "*They were steadfastly devoted (committed with passionate priority) to the teaching of the apostles (biblical teaching), and devoted to the fellowship...*"

Two Key Elements are **HARMONY** and **UNITY**.
Ephesians 4:3... "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*"

B. **THE CHURCH IS A FAMILY**

Ephesians 2:19-22... ¹⁹ *So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,* ²⁰ *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.* ²¹ *The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord.* ²² *You also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.*

The Church Family should operate on
RELATIONSHIPS NOT JUST RULES ALONE.

C. **THE CHURCH IS A BODY**

Rom. 12:4-6... *"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We each have different gifts according to the grace given us."*

We are a Body - not a business! We are an organism - not an organization!

THE CHURCH BODY FUNCTIONS BEST ON THE BASIS OF **SPIRITUAL GIFTS** NOT **JUST ELECTED OFFICES**

D. **THE CHURCH IS A FLOCK**

(One of Jesus's favorite description of the Church)

John 10:14,15... ¹⁴ *"I am the good shepherd. I know My own sheep, and they know Me,* ¹⁵ *as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep.*

Acts 20:28... *Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock that the Holy Spirit has appointed you to as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood.*

THE CHURCH FLOCK IS BEST CARED FOR AND LED BY **FAITHFUL SHEPHERDS**.

E. **THE CHURCH IS AN ARMY**

2 Timothy 2:1-3... *You, therefore, my son, be strong in*

the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

THE CHURCH AS AN ARMY IS COMMITTED TO WORK AND SERVE, LIVE AND DIE FOR THE GOOD OF THEIR COMMANDING OFFICE AND THE PROTECTION OF THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS.

My hope is that we can be more than just an **audience but that we be an army**. An army of committed believers moving towards a deeper Right Relationship with God and with One Another.

With that in mind let's look a graphic from Saddleback Community Church and Pastor Rick Warren called ...

FIVE CIRCLES OF COMMITMENT

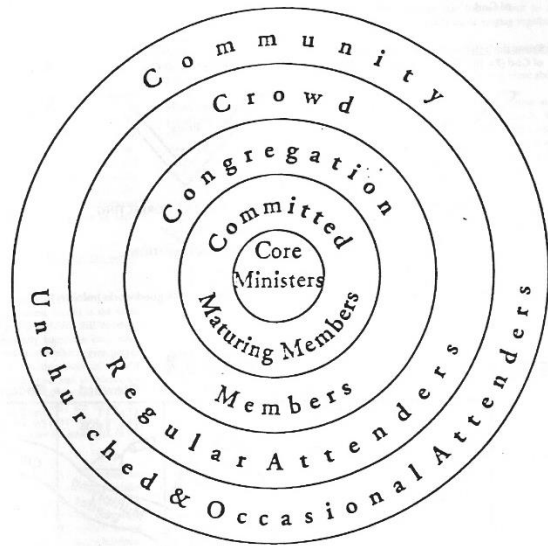
The COMMUNITY – Unchurched or Occasional Attenders

The CROWD – Regular Attenders

The CONGREGATION-Members

The COMMITTED - Maturing Members

The CORE - Active in Ministry & Missions



The difference between "attenders" and "members" can be summed up in one word: **COMMITMENT**.

I understand that each person here has some similar but also some different ideas and perceptions about church membership. First, let me make it clear that it is not a matter of your salvation to be a member of any local church. But I think that there are sound and biblical reasons for you to consider becoming a 'card-carrying' member of a local church, in this case the First Baptist Church of Broussard.

The leadership of First Baptist Broussard has always recognized and encouraged the need for a formal membership. I would like to share with you Four Reasons to commit to local church membership.

1. **A Biblical Reason:** Christ is committed to the church.

Ephesians 5:25...

Christ loved the church, and He gave His life for it."

2. **A Cultural Reason:** It is an antidote to the self-centered materialism of our society.

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...our country. This attitude has even produced a generation of "church shoppers & hoppers." Membership swims against the current of America's "consumer religion." It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

3. **A Practical Reason:** It defines who can be counted on to serve and support.

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.

4. **A Personal Reason:** It produces spiritual growth.

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you're not committed to any specific church family.

Let's look further into what a commitment to church membership looks like. This commitment can also be described as a covenant agreement to work in agreement.

Read with me this Church Covenant that we as a body have voted on and agreed to comply with.

I. CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Ghost, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment. We should strive to 'avoid even the appearance of evil' while maintaining a strong Biblical witness, including the avoidance of gossip, unkind criticism, excessive anger, the use and marketing of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, illegal drugs, and the abuse of prescription drugs, and pornography.

We should use our influence to support: the Sanctity of Life, Biblical Marriage, and Biblical gender identities (male or female as created by God), remaining faithful and zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

Now with that general understanding the next step is to make a verbal commitment to the following Covenant Commitment Membership Statements:

1. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH

- By acting in love toward other members and attenders.

Rom. 15:19... *"So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together."*

- By refusing to gossip or talk negatively.

Eph. 4:29... *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs..."*

- By following the godly guidance of our church leaders.

Hebrews 13:17...

Hebrews 13:17... *Obey your leaders and follow their*

leadership, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

2. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH

- By praying for its spiritual and numerical growth.

1 Thess. 1:2...*"To the church ... we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly."*

- By inviting the unchurched to attend worship services and other ministry events of our church.

Luke 14:23...*"The Master said to the servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes, and urge the people there to come so my house will be full.'"*

- By warmly welcoming those who visit our church.

Rom. 15:7...*"So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified."*

3. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH

- By discovering and using my gifts and talents.

1 Peter 4:10...*"Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you..."*

- By being equipped to serve by my pastor and church

leaders.

Eph. 4:11-12...*"God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."*

- By developing a servant's heart.

- **Phil. 2:3-4,7...***"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant..."*

4. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH

- By attending faithfully Worship services, Bible Study, Discipleship classes and other church events.

Heb. 10:25...*Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another."*

- By living a godly life according to Biblical values.
Phil. 1:27...*"But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ."*

- By giving regularly.

1 Cor. 16:2...*"Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering."*

INVITATION