

Become a Member

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1. Why Membership Matters

Does it really matter if I'm a member or not? Why do I have to take a class to even become a member? Why do I have to sign anything? People often ask these questions about our membership process, skeptical as to why there seem to be so many "hoops" to jump through.

It's true, We take membership seriously and with a lot of gravity. Committing yourself to a body of believers is weighty. But it's also wonderful. In a day and age where it is so easy to drift in and out of churches unnoticed follow up and accountability can easily go by the wayside. When a new member joins, they commit to a spiritual family that provides encouragement, accountability, and support. They are called to a Biblical degree of responsibility, service and sacrifice to their brothers and sisters.

Our elders also pledge to assist our church members with care, discipleship, prayer, and teaching.

We believe there are at least three reasons for formal church membership at The Bride Church.

First, we believe the concept of church membership is Biblical. While the term “church member” is never used in the Bible, the concept is implicit throughout the New Testament. Christians clearly identified themselves with a specific local church and were challenged to become devoted participants.

Second, formal membership is valuable to the leaders of the church as they seek to fulfill their God-given task of caring for the people of The Bride Church.

The Bride Church attracts believers, skeptics, unbelievers, and others just visiting. We hope that will always be the case. But at some point, it is important to identify those who comprise The Bride Church “family” —the core that can be counted on to build and sustain the ministries of the church. Specifically, these are the folks who provide leadership as elders, deacons, teachers, leaders of ministries, and faithful servants.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, experience shows that membership benefits the individual. In a culture where commitment is no longer highly valued, recognizable membership is an important step that moves a person from good intentions to committed participation—to publicly declare a commitment to Christ and to a community of faith. In this sense, membership can be a significant defining moment in a person’s journey as a committed Christ follower.

2. How do I request membership?

You may request church membership by doing any one of the following:

1. Come to the front of the church during the ministry time and communicate your desire to become a church member to the pastor or a member of the Elder Board.
2. Call the church office and indicate your desire to request church membership.

Once you've made your request for church membership, a member of the Elder Board will contact you to discuss your request. If you meet the qualifications for membership listed below, you will be encouraged to attend a Membership Class.

3. Who may become a member?

Any person who has expressed a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, has been baptized as a believer, is committed to actively following Jesus Christ in discipleship and has signed a Member's Covenant may request church membership. **If you are not already a follower of Christ and would like to know how to become one, simply indicate your desire to any member of the Elder Board.** There is absolutely nothing any of the Elders consider more important than helping someone establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

4. Why is believer's baptism required for membership at The Bride Church?

At The Bride Church, the Bible is the source of our beliefs, including our views on baptism. A few key passages help show the purpose baptism plays in the life of a Christian.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands his followers to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Baptism is the means by which disciples are identified. Because Christ Himself commanded baptism, Christ’s followers willingly submit to it.

In passages such as Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48, it is evident that the act of baptism came after an individual’s decision to trust Christ for salvation. It was an outward sign of something that had occurred in the person’s life (usually quite recently). No one would dream of being baptized unless he or she had made a decision to identify with Christ, and no one could make that decision for a person. The New Testament records the baptisms of adults who were believers, but never infants. Baptism is a Biblical command that identifies a person as being with united with Christ therefore anyone professing Christ should eagerly desire to be baptized.

In Romans 6:1-11, Paul explains how the immersion mode of baptism identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Going under water depicts Christ’s death and burial. Coming out of the water illustrates His resurrection. We believe the immersion mode of baptism best illustrates the work of Christ in a person’s life.

5. If I'm a Christian, may I still become a member of The Bride Church if I wasn't baptized as a believer?

We do ask that you be baptized first. We make this request not out of judgment of your prior experience of baptism, but rather in affirmation of the New Testament practice of believer's baptism. If for some medical reason an individual cannot be baptized by immersion a decision by the Elders will be made to accommodate their condition.

6. Member's Covenant

The Bride Church's Membership Covenant is birthed out of our love for the church body and its individual members whom we hope will experience the fullness of joy which is found in the presence of the Lord. The primary purpose of this covenant is to serve as a teaching document with three functions:

- To clarify the Biblical obligations and expectations for the individual members of The Bride Church body.
- To establish teaching and doctrinal parameters for The Bride Church body.
- To serve as a tool for reflection and growth toward holiness.

What Is a Covenant?

A covenant is generally defined as “a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action.” Within the Scriptures, we find a number of examples of covenants, some between God and man (Genesis 6; Genesis 9; Genesis 15; Ezekiel 20; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 31; Matthew 26), while others are solely between men (1 Samuel 18, 2 Samuel 5). In some covenants, one party binds his or herself to fulfill the obligations of both sides of the agreement. In others, the parties are reciprocally bound to adhere to the obligations. While God’s covenant with the Church universal is an example of the former, the local church covenant represents the latter. If at any time one of the parties of this church covenant continues in a state of unfaithfulness to its provisions, the other is released from certain obligations.

The covenant of The Bride Church is simply an agreement. It is not an oath and you do not have to swear by anything or anyone. In fact, it contains many conditions that are merely general Christian obligations. For example, all Christians, whether members of The Bride Church or elsewhere, are required to submit to the Scriptures, pursue holiness, steward resources, etc. Such requirements are universal obligations for the Christ-follower regardless of any failure on the part of local church to live up to her covenant obligations. However, this covenant agreement gives each member God-honoring accountability, encouragement, and support.

Signing the Covenant. The final step in becoming a member is to sign the Membership Covenant. We will explain the covenant, listen to your testimony and answer any questions you might have. Once you fulfill the requirements of membership and sign the covenant, you are considered a member of The Bride Church.

Statement of faith for covenant membership

1. I am a Christian saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, through his death and resurrection, by which I am assured of eternal life (John 3:16-18; Rom. 3:23-26).
2. I believe Jesus Christ is exactly who he claimed to be (Isa. 53:6; Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:70; John 4:25-26; 6:29; 8:58).
3. I have repented of my sins and have been made a new creation in Christ (1John 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17).
4. In obedience to Scripture, I have been baptized to personally identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and to publicly demonstrate my commitment as a disciple of Jesus (Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:21).
5. I agree that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the ultimate doctrinal authority on all matters (Is. 55:11; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:15-16; Heb. 4:12).

My obligation to The Bride Church as a member

1. I acknowledge that I have read and agree with The Bride Church Doctrinal Statement and will not teach or distribute anything contrary to it. (Romans 12:18, Ephesians 4:1-3)
2. I will maintain a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and practice of spiritual disciplines. (Ps. 105:1-2; Ps. 119:97; Acts 2:42-47). It is my desire, by God's grace, to walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
3. I will practice Biblical stewardship in regard to my time, talents, energy, and resources. (Prov. 3:9-10; Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 5:22-26; Eph. 4:1-16; 5:15-18).
4. I will engage in meaningful Christian community, through a consistent form of Biblical community. (Acts 2, 3, 4)
5. I agree to live out the mission of Jesus in my daily life and by sacrificially serving others. (1 Corinthians 12:4-10)
6. I covenant to submit to discipline by God through his Holy Spirit and to follow biblical procedures for church discipline in my relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ if the need should ever arise (Ps. 141:5; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 2 Cor. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 1:9; 3:10-11).

I understand that this covenant expresses my desire to be one with the members of The Bride Church family and expresses a willingness to submit to the elders of the church as spoken of in Hebrews 13:17, 1Peter 5:1-5. I accept the responsibility to notify The Bride Church leadership if at any time, I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding The Bride Church.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date: