



MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Session 1

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” 1 Peter 2:9-10

I. Basics of the Church

- A. What is the Church?
- B. Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 25/ Of the Church)

I. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:10,22,23; Eph. 5:23,27,32; Col. 1:18)

II. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

(1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Cor. 12:12,13; Ps. 2:8; Rev. 7:9; Rom. 15:9-12; 1 Cor. 7:14; Acts 2:39; Ezek. 16:20,21; Rom. 11:16; Gen. 3:15; Gen. 17:7; Matt. 13:47; Isa. 9:7; Eph. 2:19; Eph. 3:15; Acts 2:47)

III. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto. (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-13; Matt. 28:19,20; Isa. 59:21)

IV. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. (Rom. 11:3,4; Rev. 12:6,14 Rev. chap. 2, 3; 1 Cor. 5:6,7)

V. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth to worship God according to his will. (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. chap. 2, 3; Matt. 13:24-30,47; Rev. 18:2; Rom. 11:18-22; Matt. 16:18; Ps. 72:17; Ps. 102:28; Matt. 28:19,20.)

VI. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense, be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God. (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22; Matt. 23:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:3,4,8,9; Rev. 13:6)

II. How RCC is Structured

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons...”

A. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd

- Ephesians 1:9, 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23
- Hebrews 3:1
- 1 Peter 5:4

B. Elders are the servants - leaders of the church

- Elders are men chosen and appointed by God for the ministry according to clear biblical requirements (1 Timothy 2:11-3:10, Titus 1:5-9). The elders are always spoken of in plurality because God intends for more than one man to lead and rule over the church as a safeguard for both the church and the man.

- The elders' duties include **ruling** (1 Timothy 5:17), **managing** (1 Timothy 3:4-5), **tending** (1 Peter 5:2-5), **giving account** (Hebrews 13:17), **living exemplary lives** (Hebrews 13:7), **using authority** (Acts 20:28), **teaching** (Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2), **preaching** (1 Timothy 5:17), **doctrinal instruction** (Titus 1:9), and **discipline** (Matthew 18:15-17).

C. Deacons are the servants of the church

- Deacons are the servants of the church who are also called and equipped by God for their ministry according to clear biblical requirements which are very similar to that of an elder, minus the teaching and preaching abilities. Unlike elders, deacons can be either male or female (1 Timothy 3:8-13) as with the example of the woman Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2). Deacons will serve as the "hands and feet of the church" and will work alongside and oftentimes as assistants to the elders in the church.
- Deacons work to meet the specific needs of the church- they will oftentimes put into action the plans, ideas, and vision of the elders.

D. Members are the primary body of the church

- What are some of the responsibilities of church membership?
 - Members attend Services
 - Practice the "one-another commands" of the Bible
 - Serve
 - Pray & Give Regularly

III. Why does Membership Matter?

"In the NT there is no such thing as a Christian who is not a member. Conversion was described as 'the Lord adding to the church' (Acts 2:47). There was no spiritual drifting" –Douglas Millar

A. Common Objections

- Commitment-phobia
- Options open approach
- Is membership even biblical?

B. Biblical Rational for joining a Church

- The Analogy of Citizenship (Psalms 46,48,87; Matt.21:43; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 12:22-24; Rev. 21)
- The Analogy of Family (Luke 8:21; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 5:25-33; Heb. 2:11; 1 John 3:1-3)
- The Analogy of a Body (1 Cor. 12)
- The Biblical Descriptions of church community...
 - The Interdependence of Believers (1 Cor. 12:21)
 - The Mutual Responsibilities of Believers (Rom. 12:16; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:25-26)
 - The Relationship between Church Member and Church Officers (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Heb. 13:17)
 - The Discipline Process Christ Outlines in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 18:15-20)
 - Election of Church Officers (Acts 6:3-6)
- The early church had a notion of membership that included...
 - Numerical record (Acts 2:37-47)
 - Records for Widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16)
 - Elections (Acts 6:1-6)
 - Church Discipline... Formal exclusion presupposes formal inclusion (1 Cor. 5; Gal. 6:1)
 - Accountability to Leadership (Hebrews 13:17)
 - And an Awareness of Who was a Church Member (Rom. 16:1-16)

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." **2 Timothy 2:15**

IV. Overview of RCC's Theological Beliefs

A. Christian

B. Evangelical

C. Reformed- Three Forms of Unity/ Westminster Standards

D. Missional