



Session 1 – Basics of Membership

I. Why a membership Class?

- This fits into my understanding of being an effective pastor. 1 Peter 5:2 says to elders/ pastors to “shepherd the flock that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”
- Part of my role is to be a shepherd. To be a shepherd of the flock means a couple of things.
 1. The flock has to be believers. So, I want to make sure that those who join the church are true born again believers. Will I be able to tell for certain? That is ultimately between an individual and the Lord.
 2. A Membership class allows me to explain *who we are* as a church and what we believe before a person chooses to be a part of this “flock”.
 3. This class allows me to explain Biblical *expectations for anyone* who wants to be a part of this local church here at FBC Loxley.
 4. Being a shepherd is to help us understand also our purpose, core Values, Mission, Vision, and our Strategy.
 5. Being a good shepherd and taking care of the flock is to help every believer know where God has gifted them and plug you into ministry.
 6. I will stand accountable to the “Chief Shepherd” for how I have taken care of the flock.

II. What does Church Membership Mean?

One word that distinguishes attendees from members → Commitment

Becoming a member at First Baptist Church of Loxley means that you are committing yourself to **this** local body of believers to do and accomplish the purposes that the Bible tells us to do as a local body of believers.

1. Worship God with a local body of believers – Acts. 13:1-3
[Christ-Centered Worship; Passionate Prayer]

2. Learn the Word of God from Pastors – Acts 2:42 (congregations role); 1 Timothy 4:13 & 2 Timothy 4:2 (Pastor's/ Elders' role).
[Biblical Exposition; Disciple-Making; Godly leadership]

3. Serve God with your gifts and talents through a local church – 1 Cor. 12:7
[Faithful-Servants]

4. Serve and Edify one-another – Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-32; 1 Peter 4:10-11
[Authentic Fellowship]

5. Be equipped to evangelize & make disciples – Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:10
[Disciple-Making]

III. Why be a member? Is membership Biblical?

A. Church Membership is the New Testament Model

This is clear from the Book of Acts

Acts 2:1 – “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.”

The first church began in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and took up residence in the first believers.

Who was gathered in one place? Look back a few verses to chapter **1:13-15**

“13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,”

These verses say the church began with 120 people and even gives some names of the members of this group.

This is significant because it means that someone was keeping a formal count of those who were part of the First Church of Jerusalem.

This pattern continues through the Book of Acts as the early church grew. Luke gives repeated updates of how many people were members of the church.

Examples:

In chapter 2 – Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, preached a powerful sermon and thousands were convicted of the truth and believed the gospel.

Acts 2:41 says – *“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”*

The Greek word for “added” means to be “placed into” and speaks of a deliberate, calculated act of adding a select number to a greater, existing whole.

In other words the early church was keeping a careful count of those being added as new members to the body.

Even after the Day of Pentecost people continued to formally join the church at Jerusalem. **Acts 2:47** says – *“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”*

The Greek word for added is the same word used back in verse 41.

Through the book of Acts you see the church continuing to grow and flourish.

Acts 4:4 -*“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

The Greek word for “number” is the word from which we get “arithmetic,” which is the science of the computation of numbers. In other words, the early church was deliberate in its calculation of those joining. There was no informal, loose affiliation on the part of the first Christians when it came to joining a church.

Church membership was taken seriously and considered a privilege.

Acts 5:13-14 goes on to say – *“13None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. 14And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women”*

In verse 14 the word for added is the same word used back in chapter 2.

Looking at verse 13, it says “none of the rest dared join them...” In its context, this verse speaks of non-believers who were afraid to join them because of the signs and wonders that were accompanying the apostles.

The Greek word for “join” here means “to formally join” or “to unite with” or “to glue together.”

It is the same word used in I Cor. 6:16 in describing a man and a woman being “joined together” through sexual intimacy.

This is the same word used in I Cor. 6:17 to describe the relationship between believers and Christ when they are “joined together” at the point of salvation.

In light of this, the Greek word for “join” paints a powerful word-picture that in the early church joining the church was a big deal, it was formal and it was a privilege.

And that is what the first Christians did; they “joined” the local church at Jerusalem as formal and identifiable members.

We see from the Book of Acts that church membership was practiced in the early church; we also see that Paul believed in formal church membership.

B. Why Membership is Important at FBC Loxley

Let’s review. We have seen that church membership is the New Testament model and what is membership at FBC Loxley. Now let’s talk about why we feel membership is important at FBC.

1. We Need Each Other as **“Members”** of Christ Body
 - When individuals are saved, they become members of the “body” of Christ. At salvation, individuals are united to Christ and to one another. Every believer is given a gift that God has given Sovereignly to be used through the local church. Since every believer is to use their gift to “exalt Jesus as Lord – 1 Cor. 12:3” then we realize that every believer is important to the body of believers at FBC Loxley.
2. We are **Saved** into a Learning Community
 - As we talked about earlier, in the New Testament when people were saved and baptized they formally joined with other believers in a local assembly. According to Acts 2:42, this local assembly of believers were devoted to four things.
 - The apostle’s teaching – this is the teaching of Scripture

- Fellowship – sharing life together
- Breaking of Bread – sharing in the Lord’s Supper together
- Prayer
- At FBC Loxley we are committed to providing such an atmosphere. One that fosters spiritual growth and service for the Lord.

3. We are **Nourished and Protected** by Pastoral Care

- The Bible teaches that God-called Pastors are responsible to
 - Shepherd God’s people
 - Labor diligently among them
 - Keep watch over their souls
- And because of this we will have to give an account to God for those who are entrusted to their care
- Keeping in mind that the responsibility of shepherds is not to pet the sheep but to feed and protect them, FBC’s pastors shepherd the members through teaching the Bible and offering loving spiritual guidance.
- But the only way they can do this, is if they know who has been entrusted to their care.

4. We **Give and Receive** Genuine Love

- Like members of family, FBC members love each other enough to mutually encourage healthy and productive living and to hold one another accountable.
- Obviously, this depends on FBC members knowing who their members are
- And when they do, they can provide them with the care they need, even including the loving discipline necessary to foster healthy living.

5. We **Build** Each Other Up

- Scripture exhorts all believers to edify or to “build up” each other. How do we do this at FBC Loxley?
 - We practice the “one-another’s” – Heb. 10:24-25 says *“24And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”*
 - We exercise our spiritual gifts – 1 Pet. 4:10 says *“10As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*
- Of course this presupposes that Christ-followers have committed themselves to other believers in a local assembly.
- At FBC, we are committed to creating this environment of encouragement and we do this primarily through:
 - Corporate Worship
 - Small Group Bible Study

- Relationship Building
- Service Opportunities

So, these five reasons are why we feel membership is important. You may be asking yourself ‘why do you guys make such a big deal out of membership?’ Why do I need to sit through a membership class?

At FBC we feel that living out a commitment to a local church involves both responsibility and privilege. As part of the FBC faith-community, members are expected to:

- To live a godly lifestyle
- Exercise spiritual gifts in service
- Contribute financially to the church’s ministries

In turn, members receive admonishment in meekness and love and find pleasure in pleasing God through corporate worship.

So, in regarding membership much is expected, much is received and much is at stake. When members are faithful to their commitment, FBC Loxley is able to be faithful to its calling to be Christ’s representative to Loxley, Baldwin County, Alabama, North America, and to all Nations.

That covers the why’s and what’s of membership. Now lets move on to talk about the requirements for membership.

IV. What we require to become a member of FBC Loxley -

Step one: Salvation

A person must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible calls this being “born again” or saved (see John 3). To be saved a person has to realize and **admit** that he or she is a sinner and that no person can do anything on his or her own earn salvation. No good works or morality can save a person (Eph. 2:8). Each person must **repent** of their sins and **confess** that Jesus Christ is Lord and **believe** in his or her heart that God raised him from the dead in order to be saved (Acts 2:38). Choosing to commit one’s life to Christ is a life-long **commitment**. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said that we should count the cost before we follow him. He said that if anyone was going to follow Him, he or she has to take up their cross and follow Him **daily**.

In summary, each person must *admit* they are sinners, *repent* of their sins, *believe* that Jesus died for them, *confess* their sins to Jesus and confess their need for him, *ask* for forgiveness of one’s sins, trust him for his forgiveness, and *commit* one’s life to Him. Based on the promise of Romans 10:13, every person that calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Step two: Baptism

Baptism does not save an individual from their sins. Baptism is simply an outward symbol of an inner commitment to Christ. Baptism symbolizes the burial of the old life (before being a Christian) and the raising up of the new life (after a person becomes a Christian).

(see Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 28:19-20)

New Christian:

If an individual has committed his or her life to Christ as their Lord and Savior, then a person is baptized by immersion. This is the first step of obedience as a believer.

Christian but never baptized:

If an individual accepted Christ at some point in his or her life, then he or she must be obedient to scripture and be baptized.

Christian but baptized in some other way besides immersion:

The Bible teaches that baptism was done by immersion. Every baptism in scripture was done by immersion. The Greek word for baptism literally means to “put under.” Thus, a person baptized by another method would need to be baptized according to scriptural guidelines. (Acts 8:12, 38-39; Acts 9:12; Acts 16:15; Matt. 3:16)

Step three: New Members Class

Once a person has chosen Christ, then our church asks individuals to go through a New Members class. This is a relaxed class that is taught at a set time. The class explains what it means to be a member of FBC. The class explains biblical membership, our beliefs, our purpose, Core Values, mission, vision, strategy, spiritual gifts and how a person can serve at FBC. The class also allows for you to get to know the pastor and for him to get to know you.

Step four: Membership affirmation

Our church votes on receiving the member and rejoices in receiving the individual as a member of the church.

What do we expect of our members?

1. Love God and Love People

You can't do one without the other. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

2. Be involved in FBC's Ministry

No one has to do everything, but everyone does something. Church is not somewhere we go, it is something we are.

3. Make Christ and Church a Priority

In our busy schedules, these two priorities often get set aside. Our top 3 priorities: God, Family, Church.

4. Promote the Unity of FBC

We always speak well of our church and church family. Never allow personal or political issues to divide the community of Christ.

5. Support FBC Financially

We all have a part to do in supporting our growing ministry. This is not only a commandment, but a joy and a privilege.

6. Be Willing to Do Whatever Needs Doing.

We are not above any job or need. If we see something that needs taken care of, we step up to the plate and do it.

7. Invest In and Invite the People Around You

We invite the people in our lives to come experience God at FBC! God has placed them in our lives for us to reach out to them.

8. Get into a Small Group Bible Study

We all need regular study of God's Word. The Bible is our compass for everyday life.

9. Pray for Your Staff and Church Family

Every person in our church has needs. Lift them up in prayer; they will be doing the same for you.

10. Enjoy God.

It may sound strange, but Christ came that we might have abundant life. God is so good. He blesses us beyond anything that we deserve.

Session 2– What We Believe

We are a Southern Baptist Church. To understand what we believe, you must look at the Baptist Faith and Message, 2000.

Session 3- FBC Loxley's Purpose, Mission, & Core Values

I. Purpose and Mission

Our Purpose is: "To love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to help other people do the same."

Simply stated: "Our Purpose is to love God and help others do the same."

Our Mission stems from our Purpose: actually loving God with all of our being and then taking proper steps to see that others do the same.

II. Core Values

1. We Value Passionate Prayer

We emphasize that prayer should be *passionate* in every individual believer and in corporate times of worship. “*Passionate*” defines prayer as being regular and fervent. Prayer is an instrument by which the Holy Spirit empowers the individual and the corporate body of believers to live for God.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without Ceasing.”

John 14:13 “And whatever you ask in my name, this I will do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

Jeremiah 29:13 “You will seek me and find. Me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the Lord.”

Form:

- a. Wednesday Prayer Service
- b. Prayer emphasis in Sunday morning Worship services

2. We value Biblical Exposition

We believe the Bible is the authority for all of our preaching and teaching. We value people being developed into Christ-likeness by hearing the Word of God accurately exposed and explained from the pulpit, in every Bible study, and in every small group.

Biblical Support

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

Ephesians 4:12 “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Forms:

- a. Expository Preaching

Each week the Pastor will take a passage of scripture and “expose” the passage’s *meaning and truths* that it meant in its context and then make application for our daily lives.

b. Expository Teaching

Every class is centered around the Bible and its meaning

c. Small Group Bible Studies

Sunday Morning for all ages (9:45)

d. G-Force (Children’s Wed. night)

e. Youth

f. Discipleship Classes

g. Young Christian’s Class

Goal – To educate, equip, and empower believers with the Word of God in order to move believers from spiritual birth to spiritual maturity.

3. We value **Christ-Centered Worship**

We value Christ-centered worship that glorifies God rather than man. Believers are to constantly worship individually with their lives and are also expected to gather to worship as the Body of Christ.

John 4:23 “The hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Isaiah 6; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25; Isaiah 42:8

Form:

- a. Corporate Worship through song, prayer, drama, preaching, and scripture reading.
- b. Lord’s Supper to declare the death, resurrection and second coming of Jesus
- c. Individual lifestyles of worship are taught, encouraged, and held accountable

Goal – To see every Believer authentically worship God in a way that brings Him glory both individually and corporately.

4. We value **Disciple-Making**

We value Evangelism and Missions because we desire for all people to be transformed by Jesus *from* their lostness in sin *to* being born again in Him and guide them to become fully devoted disciples of Christ. Our drive for making disciples is to make God's Glory known in Loxley, on the Eastern Shore, North America, and all Nations.

Biblical Support:

Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Form –

Local

- a. Mission projects locally
- b. Fall Festival/ Block Parties
- c. VBS
- d. State Missions annual missions offering
- e. Church planting

North America

- f. North American Mission trips
- g. North American Annual Missions Offering
- h. Church planting

Nations/ International

- i. International Mission trips
- j. Lottie Moon Annual Missions Offering
- k. Church planting

Goal – To see believers burdened for the lost and actively sharing Jesus wherever they go in order to see lost people transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5. We value **Godly Leadership**

We believe every leader in the church is called to be a Christ-like example and is held accountable to the standard of Scripture. The membership of the church is to follow and support godly leaders.

Biblical support:

Leaders

1 Timothy 4:12-13,15-16 “. . . Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. (15) Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

1 Peter 5:2-3 “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.”

1 Corinthians 11:1 “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

Congregation

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, 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.”

Other:

Scripture relating to church discipline to leaders

1 Timothy 5:17-20

Form:

- Leaders are chosen and held to scriptural standards
- Leaders must bear spiritual fruit – John 15:5; Galatians 5:24
- Church prays for and supports the leadership.

6. We value **Faithful Servants**

We believe all members should be committed to serve the Lord through the church and in their everyday lives with all that they have. Believers are expected to grow spiritually and become more equipped with their God-given gifts.

Biblical Support:

1 Corinthians 12:7 “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

1 Peter 4:10 “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

Form:

Serving

- a. Spiritual Gifts, talents, time, money
- b. Bible study teacher
- c. Greeter
- d. Usher
- e. Praise Team
- f. Faithful attendance

Goal: To see every member faithfully serving the Lord in some capacity in the church.

7. We value **Authentic Relationships**

We believe being connected to a Biblical community is not optional. *No one* should walk alone in the Christian journey since we are all members of one body. As we walk together in Christ, authentic fellowship will result in life-changing relationships.

Biblical Support:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10,12

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Other passages: Acts 2:42-47; Romans 12:5; Phil. 2:1-11; Hebrews 10:24-25

Form:

- a. Small Group Bible Study
- b. Fellowship Meals

Goal: To see every believer connected to other Christians in a small Group so that they can be encouraged, deepen relationships, and held accountable to the Word of God.