

Membership is a Relationship

1st: A Relationship with Jesus Christ

Life is all about relationships and our most important relationship is with Jesus Christ.

Bill Brewer, Senior Pastor

Common confession that Jesus is the Christ

For many, the word ‘membership’ often evokes a concept of formal status, an achieved position in an organization after the completion of a process. The Bible presents an altogether different concept of church membership, based on a faith relationship with Christ and brotherhood with believers.

Becoming part of the spiritual family called the church is first of all dependent on what we believe about Jesus Christ. He came to build a relationship with man, saying in John 1:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.

He is the Son of the Living God, our personal Savior and the rightful ruler of our lives. Through this confession we have spiritual ties which can draw and keep us together as a family. Or, to say it another way, we are a family because we all have the same heavenly Father and we enter God’s family through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus. Only Christians can be true members of the church family!

Am I a Member of Jesus’ Family?

There are many people who believe in God and may even have a correct idea of who Jesus is; yet they are uncertain whether or not they are Christians. They have no “real sense” of a personal relationship with Jesus. Let’s consider what it means to have a relationship with Jesus and how we can be certain about the commitment we make.

Important truths

1 God loves us! His plan is for our good. Sometimes people get the idea that serving God is the same as giving up all the good things life offers. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Bible says that God desires our lives to be full of joy and abundance. The thief attempts to take from us; Jesus came to give (John 10:10) and every gift that He gives is perfect and good (James 1:16-18).

2 It is natural for us to reject God. Isaiah 53:6 describes us as sheep that have forsaken the shepherd and have turned to our own way. Sheep need a shepherd and without one they will eventually wind up lost and will fall prey to any number of destructive enemies and influences. Every person is guilty of making choices independent of what God wants for his or her life (Romans 3:23). The Bible calls such self-centeredness and proud independence sin.

3 Our sin has separated us from God. This separation is called death. Romans 6:23 says that the wage of sin is death. God created us to have a relationship with Him but we have been unwilling to build that relationship on His terms. Yet God is the Creator! It is not reasonable for us to expect Him to compromise. We must take God on His terms, not ours! We have no right to create our own set of criteria for the relationship.

Often we do not recognize the extent of our independence nor do we feel the “sting” of death until we face some sort of crisis in our lives. We work to try and prove ourselves worthy of God’s love and acceptance. We don’t realize that we can’t earn God’s acceptance. We do not have the ability or power to reconnect what has been separated.

4 Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Through Him we can know and experience God’s forgiveness, acceptance, love and goodness. God’s love for us is so extensive that He answered our need Himself. God’s Son became a man in Jesus, suffered what all men suffer because of evil in the world and then died, paying in full the debt man owed for sin. Jesus lived righteously, submitting to the Father and

refusing to give in to temptation and sin. Then, having no sin of His own to pay for, He took our sin and guilt on Himself at the cross. He died the death we deserved to die for our sin. He made a trade receiving our sin so that we might receive His righteousness. (Philippians 2:5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

God declared that the sacrifice of Jesus was sufficient for all sin by raising Him from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). Death was rendered powerless for all who will receive the death of Jesus Christ as their own. Jesus faced the truth about our wickedness and gave His life to deal with the problem we were helpless to take care of ourselves. John 14:6 tells us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no one can come into a relationship with God except through Him.

Have you received Jesus as your personal Savior? It is not enough to merely accept the facts about Jesus, we must each “embrace” Him as our Savior and “receive” His death as payment for our own personal sin (John 1:12). Each one of us must receive Jesus Christ because we are convinced that what He offers us is of infinite and incomparable value and that we cannot have a relationship with God or be a part of His family apart from trusting in Jesus Christ.

If you have never received Jesus in this way, then you are not a member of His family, the church. You can enter that family right now, however, by receiving Him and trusting in what He has done for you. There is no other gift large enough to purchase a relationship with God. There is no other work difficult enough to earn your salvation. Jesus has purchased it, He has earned it for you! Will you believe in Him and receive His gift? You can do that by praying a simple prayer like this one:

“Lord Jesus, I need you! I believe that you are God’s Son who died to pay the penalty for my sins. You died in my place and took my sin upon yourself. Thank you for what you did for me when you died on the cross. I believe that you are alive, resurrected from the dead and right now I am placing all my trust in you. Today, I receive you into my life as my own personal Savior. Thank you for forgiving me a life of sins and for giving me eternal life. I give my heart and life to you now. Make me into the person you want me to be. In Jesus name, Amen”.

If you prayed that prayer for the first time, today or in the coming weeks, we would like to know about it so we can rejoice with you and encourage you to grow in your new relationship with Christ and His church. Please tell your Discovery 101 leader about the decision you have made.

Membership in any true church begins with a relationship with Jesus Christ! He must be your personal Savior.

2nd: Relationships with other Believers

*Relationships in the body of Christ are one of the greatest gifts
God has given to us, and they should be treasured.
Mark Engelthaler, Executive Pastor*

Richland Bible Fellowship Church relies on the New Testament as a guide to understanding what relationships in the modern church should look like. Chapter two of Acts is a great starting point.

Acts 2:42

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

1. An active relationship

The Bible explains that each church member has a different role and is necessary to form a complete and functioning church body.

1 Corinthians 12:12

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

Romans 12:4-8

4Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his^[1] faith. 7If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

2. An inter-dependent relationship

To be a member of the church is to be integrated into the lives of others in the body and to allow them to be integrated into your life. The church is made up of people who serve one another and respond to each other's needs, hurts, and joys.

1 Corinthians 12:26

26If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

3. A committed relationship

Biblical membership is a non-negotiable commitment to others in the name of Jesus Christ. We are committed to: one another's spiritual growth, working through difficulties together, and a continuing relationship because Jesus has placed us in His family. We are spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ and we are committed to being involved in each other's lives.

Ephesians 4:25, 32

25Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

32Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

All Are Welcome

RBFC is a constantly changing and growing organization always committed to the biblical concept of church membership. It is a dynamic, living, spiritual body made up of individuals, families, and small groups. Becoming a member of Richland Bible Fellowship means you have aligned yourself with others who have also trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have embraced the same purpose and philosophy of how the body of Christ can grow and have impact in the world. Because we are dedicated to helping people know and become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ, you are welcome even if you have not trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior; we encourage everyone to seek God here.

Membership Responsibilities

*It is impossible to underestimate the blessing
that being involved in the body at RBF
has meant to my family.
Dan Wood, Facilities Manager*

A Growing Relationship with Jesus Christ

Becoming fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ involves a commitment to spiritual growth and godliness.

Faithful Attendance

Our service schedule only calls the whole church family together once a week, so it is important for us to all meet together for corporate worship, biblical instruction, and fellowship.

Involvement in Small Group Ministry

The greatest ministry and relationship-building takes place in small groups. Richland Bible Fellowship has over 65 small groups and we desire all members to be involved.

Discovery and Use of Your Spiritual Gifts

God has gifted His children and it is a member's responsibility to seek ways to use their gifts in serving Christ and His church.

Financial Support

Members of Richland Bible Fellowship Church are the sole support of all the ministries of the church, both in our community and around the world. Regular and systematic giving should be the goal of every believer.

The History of RBF

established 1979

And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:47

RBFC began as a small group of Christians in this local neighborhood who had a deep desire to see their neighbors come to Christ. They went out and "brought them to Jesus". That deep desire become a "people to people" movement. The initial sharing of personal testimonies at neighborhood parties soon developed into several neighborhood Bible studies. As new believers grew in their faith, they reached out to their friends and the fellowship continued to grow.

From 1974 to 1976, many of these people began attending Fellowship Bible Church in North Dallas. At one time, over sixty neighbors from an eight block area were members of that church. As the momentum grew, plans were made to start a branch church of Fellowship Bible Church and in the fall of 1976, Richland Bible Fellowship Church was born.

For the first three years, the church met in the Yale Elementary School. Soon, the Richardson Racquet Club, where some of those first neighborhood parties were held, was purchased and is now the home of Richland Bible Fellowship Church. In July of 1993, the church moved into a new Worship Center on the present location. The new building was clearly a demonstration of God's grace and continual working in this local body of believers. The Cornerstone project, the most recent capital program the church has undertaken, resulted in a new education building in 2001.

The church membership grew to over 1,200 in 2002 and it became apparent that a 3rd service would have to be added. The elders are now seeking God on the possibility of a new location in this same vicinity.

RBFC has a clear calling from God in our community: to help people become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. The church today continues to grow as members are still reaching out to neighbors and friends “bringing them to Jesus” and into the fellowship of believers at Richland Bible Fellowship Church.

