

# Covenant Membership – Week 1 Study

## Why Study Covenant Membership?

The study opens by explaining that **membership has drifted** from its biblical roots. Historically, church belonging was understood in terms of **covenant**, but in recent generations (like what many of us grew up with) it has often become a **voluntary club-style affiliation** instead of a **spiritual family bond**. We must return to Scripture to recover God's design for His church and avoid "autopilot drift."

## The Biblical Foundation: Romans 12 & 1 Corinthians 12

Paul provides the key framework:

- *We are many members but one body* in Christ.
- **"Individually members one of another."** (central phrase of the study)
- Each believer has different gifts for the benefit of the whole.
- Love, service, zeal, prayer, hospitality, and mutual care define the church's life.

The emphasis is that **membership isn't joining an institution — it's belonging to a body**. God has structured spiritual life so we **need one another** to mature.

## What Is a Covenant?

A **solemn and binding relationship initiated by God**, involving promises, mutual obligations, and consequences. Covenants are the primary way God has always related to humanity — Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, and fulfilled in the **New Covenant in Christ**.

Key elements highlighted:

- **Binding promise** — once made, not easily undone
- **Relationship-forming** — establishes who we are to one another
- **Divinely initiated** — God sets the terms for His people
- **Mutual response** — we obey in faith
- **Signs of remembrance** — e.g., baptism & the Lord's Supper

The Exodus parallel is used:

God conquers the lesser king (Pharaoh), delivers His people, and establishes how they are to live **as citizens of His kingdom** — Jesus does the same in the New Covenant.

## The New Identity: Adopted Family & Kingdom Citizens

Salvation doesn't just forgive sins — it **places us into God's family**, the Church. This corporate identity is a **right purchased by Christ's blood**.

Therefore:

**We belong to Christ, and we belong to each other.**

The Greek word for “members” (melē) means **belonging** — as in **your arm belongs to your body** — not optional connection. When one suffers, all suffer; when one rejoices, all rejoice.

This belonging is **unbreakable** because the bond is **Christ's own blood** — like family ties that remain regardless of conflict or distance.

## Traditional Membership vs. Covenant Membership

The teaching contrasts **common modern assumptions** with **the biblical model**:

Traditional Mindset	Covenant Mindset
Attendance is <b>optional</b>	Gathering together is <b>joyfully essential</b>
Engagement is <b>when convenient</b>	Service is <b>natural family responsibility</b>
Giving comes <b>from leftover abundance</b>	Giving is <b>a blessed privilege</b>
Conflict usually leads to <b>distance or departure</b>	Conflict is <b>worked through in love</b> , producing deeper unity
Doctrine may be <b>softened to preserve numbers</b>	Doctrine is <b>loved, taught, and wrestled with together</b>
Goal: <b>decisions and attendance</b>	Goal: <b>discipleship and maturity</b>

Membership is not “I joined a church,” but:

“God has joined me to these people — a binding family bond.”

## Practical Implications

Because we belong to one another:

- We **show up** — physically, relationally, spiritually
- We **contribute our gifts** to lighten one another's load
- We **enter each other's joys and sorrows**
- We **hold one another accountable**
- We **persevere in unity**, not walking away from hard things

Every member is needed, seen, and valuable — **there is no “unimportant” part of the body of Christ.**

## The Annual Covenant Renewal

Each January, the church corporately renews its covenant commitments. FBC Tom Bean holds **four** interlocking covenants:

1. Membership Covenant
  2. Elders → Church body
  3. Deacons → Church body
  4. Church body → Elders & Deacons
- All reinforcing: **We belong to God and to one another.**

The full Membership Covenant is read and affirmed together — a joyful reminder of our calling to walk in **love, holiness, unity, discipleship, prayer, generosity, hospitality, and reconciliation.**

## ✨ Key Takeaways

- Church membership is **not** a club — it is a **covenant**.
- The church is a **family bought by Christ's blood**, not a voluntary association.
- To be a member is to **belong** — your life is tied to the life of others.

- The goal is **discipleship**, not attendance.
- The church flourishes as every member **shows up, serves, sacrifices, and stays.**