

## **Mission, Vision and Values**

The church exists as the display of the glory of God-- because all things, including you, exist for His glory. Those who trust in and follow Jesus are caught up in something much bigger than ourselves. The Church is intended to meet the spiritual needs of believers. Together we commit ourselves to help with the spiritual needs of each member. As well, God has graciously invited each of us into His redemptive purposes for the world.

In light of this reality, the opportunity to join a local church body (i.e., a particular group of believers in a particular locale committed to following the commandments of Christ) is much more than a commitment to consistent attendance or active involvement in community. It is also God's sacred call to be involved in the proclaiming of His Son's redemptive work which pushes back the darkness of fallen mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit. The local church is God's method of taking the Light into a specific community.

Does it really matter if I'm a member or not? You may be saying, I love attending the services and serving when I can, is there a benefit to joining? Why do I have to take a class to become a member? Some ask these questions about our membership process, skeptical as to why there seems to be this "hoop" to jump through.

We take membership seriously. We believe the Bible does as well. Because the Bible is the revealed mind of God, we believe He does as well. The idea of being a formal member of a church comes from the apostle Paul, when he describes the local church as a "body" and each person within it is a "member" of that body. Committing yourself to a body of believers is a weighty decision. But it's also wonderful. When like-minded believers join together, they commit to a spiritual family that provides an atmosphere for transformation. They commit to become a member of a functioning body so that it produces more effectively as a whole body. Each believer progressively develops to receive more grace from others, but to provide encouragement, support and other graces to others. We become God's vessels carrying from our relationship to God His grace to provide what is necessary in the lives of other believers.

## **Commitment**

Commitment to a local congregation is one of the basic ingredients of a healthy, unified local church. All the other aspects of unity--praying together, serving together, worshipping together, submitting together—all assume that we share a commitment to one another. Believers are called to a biblical degree of responsibility, service and sacrifice to their brothers and sisters.

As you think about making your decision to join the church, we offer this class that offers an overview of what it means to be a member in a covenant of heart to share in our mission, basic beliefs which we teach and in our theological distinctive. We want you to know exactly what it means to join our church. The reason the Calvary Baptist Church exists is to bring glory to God by making and developing disciples through Gospel proclamation in our community life, worship, service and personal lives. There are three steps to becoming a member.

## **Qualifications for Membership**

**Church membership is offered to the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and have chosen to become His disciple.** That's a big idea sentence, I know. Look back at it. It is individual. Each one has to decide for oneself. Your parents can't pass salvation to you. Being an American doesn't make you a Christian

either. It is a decision you make from your understanding and make freely. It never needs to be repeated. Secondly, it is Christ's work that saves you, not your own. You cannot save yourself by your good works like church membership or service. Nothing you can do will remove the guilt of your sins. Salvation is His alone to give. Your only task is that you must receive what He offers. Again, you cannot provide a way to save yourself. Salvation is desiring a new relationship, a personal relationship, with God because Christ has paid your sin debt. There's nothing more to pay. He paid it all. You must receive His gift of salvation to yourself, because those who receive Him are given the authority to become children of God. (Jn. 1:12) If you have doubts about your own salvation, you can be certain now.

**The second step is water baptism or immersion.** Water baptism is only intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's work and who intend to become His disciple. As a disciple, a follower, of Christ, the first step is water baptism.

Baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols for His Church. With both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to "remember" God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection and our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith. As we enter into the waters or watch others doing so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old life style we once lived, in order to live for Christ.

For those who were sprinkled or immersed at an earlier age, it is important to understand that we should only be baptized once. If you trusted in Christ at that time, your baptism is valid and need not, indeed should not, be repeated. If, however, you experienced sprinkling with or immersion in water before being born-again and trusting Christ, your experience was not baptism, and thus you need to be baptized. The question is therefore, "Was I truly trusting in Christ when I was baptized?" If you say you were saved before baptism, your baptism is valid.

There will always be seasons of growth and greater periods of maturity in the believer's life. Believers must not be re-baptized each time they experience greater joy and personal revival. However, if you believe that your original experience was prior to truly trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior, you should pursue obedience in this area by being baptized now.

**BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE.** Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, it is not saving grace but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized.

**BAPTISM IS NOT "NECESSARY" FOR SALVATION.** The thief who would go to Paradise with Christ was not baptized. In no way, do I want to diminish the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must also warn against thinking which suggests that salvation depends upon baptism. The Gospel is salvation by grace (as a gift provided fully by Christ alone), through faith (whoever believes in Him will not perish) alone.

Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, other believers, oneself and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the command of our Lord, of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20) Water baptism doesn't wash away sin, but it is a visual and symbolic demonstration of a person's union with Christ through the likeness of His death and resurrection. It signifies that a person's former way of life has been put to death, is unresponsive as a way to live the life of the Lord's disciple. It depicts a release from the mastery of sin.

Baptism is not merely a responsibility but also a privilege. We have the opportunity to proclaim our trust in and love for our King through obedience in this ordinance. We preach Christ's death and resurrection without speaking. If we think of baptism as a burden, we have not properly understood the joy of following Christ in His call to be baptized. We should respond like the Ethiopian eunuch, who, when he believed the Gospel, proclaimed, "What prevents me from being baptized?" Baptism should be our joy. We should eagerly anticipate our participation in the ordinance. The desire to be baptized should be motivated by a desire to glorify God in your life by faithful obedience. Any other motivation (so I can join a church, or to please a friend or family member, etc.) should not be the primary reason for desiring to be baptized.

*ACTS 2:41 So those who received his word (Peter's sermon) were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

*ACTS 8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*

*GALATIANS 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Putting on Christ, taking Him as your very own precedes baptism.)*

*ROMANS 6:3-4 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

WHEN SHOULD A PERSON BE BAPTIZED? As soon as a person trusts Christ, he or she should be baptized. The Scriptures do not speak of a delayed baptism in which a believer refrains from obedience to the ordinance. That opposes the concept of discipleship. In all the accounts in the Scriptures, baptism is immediate. Immediate baptism should be followed unless there are convincing reasons to delay baptism.

One of the most common reasons for delaying water baptism is fear, but the presence of anxiety should not hinder our obedience. Because fear is sin, it should not be passively accepted. Confronting sin is an essential aspect of discipleship, and a person's obedience in this initial step of obedience begins a life journey in the process of victory of the fear of man.

Remember, there will never be a time when a person will be "good enough" for baptism. Our motivation to be baptized is grounded upon Christ's righteousness, not our own. If you have been united to Him, as a born-again believer, you should confidently draw near to Him in obedience to His command.

Though other denominations baptize by pouring or sprinkling, Calvary Baptist Church practices baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following Biblical considerations: 1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse. The English word *baptism* is a transliteration of the Greek baptizo. Baptizo was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.

**COLOSSIANS 2:12... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.**

Secondly, the representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion. Whether buried below or above ground, the symbolism of burial is still that of being placed under something. Likewise, resurrection is accomplished by coming out of something (whether grave or tomb). Immersion best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing one out. By passing through the waters of baptism, the believer expresses one's trust that God's judgment has been fully satisfied by and in Christ.

**The surrounding context of personal baptisms in the Scriptures suggests baptism by immersion.**

**MATTHEW 3:16** And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him...

**MARK 1:5, 10** And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins...And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.

**JOHN 3:23** John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized...

**ACTS 8:38–39** And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

## **A definition!**

The church is the gathering of the redeemed, the household of God (**Ephesians 2:19**), the bride of Christ (**Revelation 21:2**; **Revelation 21:9**) and the body of Christ, who are the Temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:12-31**).

**1 Corinthians 12** speaks of many members within the same body. Just as a human body relies upon mutual dependence of individual members for proper functioning, and efficient work, so the body of Christ requires sacrificial and responsible service by its individual members. As the Scriptures say, “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you’” (**1 Corinthians 12:21**). Likewise, a member of the church cannot say to another member that he or she is unnecessary. All believers have gifts, but each one differs from others according to the wisdom of God the Father and the gracious provision of the Holy Spirit (**Romans 12:3-8**). Contrary to the beliefs of our culture, we need each other to do what God has planned for our church. He has made us a completed body and when we are not committed to functioning with our gift, the worship and work is not as effective or productive.

Membership at Calvary Baptist Church is participation in a family, a microcosm of the universal household of God. All members are united to Christ and by that connection promoted by the Holy Spirit, we are united to each other. Unity within the church is expressed in personal and corporate love for God and love for other believers, those within the local church family and those who are not. Because Christ so closely identifies with His church, Christians are to display by their lifestyle His Gospel in a manner which is worthy of Him (**Ephesians 4:1**)

The New Testament describes how Christians are to love each other:

- Rom 12:15 tells us to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep.
- Ephesians 4:2 tells us to bear with one another.
- Eph. 4:32 says we are to be kind to one another, and forgive one another.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says we should encourage one another, and build one another up.
- Heb. 3:13 tells us to exhort one another.
- Heb. 10:24 says to stir one another up to love and good works.
- Jam 5:26 tells us to confess our sins to one another, and pray for each other.
  
- 1 Peter 4:9-10 says we are to show hospitality to each other, and use our gifts to serve one another.

These actions require *relationships*. You can't encourage, exhort, and stir others up to love and good works if you're just casually running into them at church once a week. You need to have real and vibrant relationships in place. In fact, doing

these Biblically required things for believers, requires an understanding that you are sharing life together, that you are open to hearing exhortation, encouragement, and even rebuke from one another when it's necessary. Put simply, it requires commitment.

The Bible and Calvary Baptist emphasizes the importance of submission to the church, its appointed leadership and its discipline. Church membership means the believer prioritizes the preservation of unity and peace. This is not the place to be divisive about favorite doctrines or positions. Church membership means one adheres to conduct described in the Word of God and applied in the church's constitution and bylaws. Church membership is a commitment to serve one another, pray for one another, and love one another.

As those who have experienced God's grace in Christ through the gospel of Jesus Christ, our church has been given the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ through the pursuit of certain attitudes and actions and the rejection of others. The Scriptures refer to this life style as "living by the Spirit" (**Romans 8**). This membership class is not intended as an addition to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, the following is an explanation of what the Scriptures teach about the obedience that faith produces. It is a commitment to a new way of living. I agree....

to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (**Psm 119; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21**).

- ✓ to pursue the knowledge and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of spiritual disciplines (**Luke 18:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:1-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22**).
- ✓ to follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church: by being baptized after my conversion **and** by regularly remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through communion.
- ✓ to regularly participate in the life of Calvary Baptist Church by attending weekly services, engaging in proclaiming the Gospel and serving those within and evangelizing those outside the church (**Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25; Titus 3:14**).
- ✓ to steward all resources, because God has given them all to me to oversee, including time, talents, spiritual gifts and finances. This includes regular financial giving, service and participation in church life that is sacrificial, cheerful and voluntary (**Matthew 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9**).
- ✓ by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, to walk in holiness in all of life as an act of worship to Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 1:13-16. 1 Peter 4:1-3**). Believers should strive to put certain attitudes and actions to death, by being unresponsive to them, while stirring and stimulating others such as love and good deeds through obedience and the control of the Spirit. Below are a few examples of actions addressed in the Scriptures:
  - I will practice complete chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage. Regardless of my marital status, I will pursue purity and abstain from sexually immoral practices such as adultery, premarital sex and pornography (**Romans 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 1 Corinthians 10:8; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4**).
  - I will refrain from illegal drug use and abuse of prescription drugs, drunkenness, gossip and other sinful behaviors according to Scripture (**Romans 1:28-32; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18**).
- ✓ to refrain from such activities that the Scriptures would deem foolish, not just sinful. (**Romans 14:14-23**).
- ✓ to take seriously the responsibility of Christian freedom, especially situations that could present a stumbling block to another (**1 Corinthians 8:1-13**).
- ✓ to submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by:

- following the biblical procedures for church discipline where sin is evident in another – the hope of such discipline being repentance and restoration.
- receiving righteous and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (**Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11**).
- ✓ When I sin, I will confess my sin to God and to fellow believers, if that sin included him or her. I will repent and seek help to put my sin to death (**Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; James 5:16; 1 Jn 1:6-10**).
- ✓ to submit to the church leadership and other appointed leaders of the church and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church (**Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5**).

Should I leave the church, I will seek in a timely manner, another Bible centered, evangelistic church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a believer.

**MY NOTES:**