



Riverview Church Membership Class: Part 4

How We Relate to One Another

How does the church relate to each individual member, and how does each individual member relate to the church?

In one sense, we are the church. When we gather as a body, we are a local expression of the church (in a broader sense). But the church itself (Riverview) also has a structure and some commitments that it makes back to us.

Let's look at one passage of scripture that talks about how the leaders of a particular church relate to the rest of the body, then we'll flip it and look at it the other way around.

"And he (Jesus) gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

What Paul describes is that the Church is Jesus' body with him at the head, and there are responsibilities for the leaders and also for everyone else in the church.

The responsibility of the church, the pastors, and other leaders is to equip the members for the work of Christ. This equipping comes in many forms: weekend service teaching, preparing curriculum, caring and shepherding (helping you with issues in your life – Life Group leaders, Stephen ministers, etc.), pre-marriage classes, couple-to-couple marriage counseling, and all sorts of other things to equip you so that you can be unified, and so each one of you can grow and build yourself up in love. Sometimes, this equipping can mean difficult things, such as discipline.

There are many levels to living a disciplined life. We are to be self-disciplined people. There are times where peer-discipline is necessary (perhaps in a life-group), where we need to call each other out and challenge each other to grow in our faith. Much like a godly father disciplines his children to help them grow.

There are times when comes to a point where there is a very big, public sin in someone's life that they refuse to repent of. When that happens, it becomes necessary for the entire church to step in to discipline them. This doesn't happen often, but it does happen sometimes. (We encourage you to download our paper on Church Discipline at the link below, or from RivWarehouse.com/resources/papers/church-discipline.pdf)

Leaders have the responsibility to teach, train and equip you to do the work of the ministry and build up the church. In the packet that you will receive after completing this class, there is a Membership Commitment that describes your responsibility as a member:

I will strive to protect the unity of my church.

In Session #1, we talked about not being uniform, but being diverse yet unified. We don't want to strive for divisiveness, but unity.

I will support Riverview's core doctrines and philosophy of ministry, and I will not be divisive over secondary issues.

We are to have the same mind and the same judgement. However, that doesn't mean we agree on every little point. We'll never agree on all of the little things. We encourage you to read our Statement of Faith, and ask yourself "Do I agree with this? In the areas in which I disagree, can I submit and not be divisive?" If you can say "yes," we're in good shape.

I will promote Riverview's mission to make sacrificial followers of Jesus who Grow, Serve, and Go.

You are aware of and commit to being on mission with us.

I will learn to serve in ministry alongside others at Riverview so that we are teaming up to advance the cause of Christ.

You are giving back of yourself – not just consuming, but committing yourself to the ministry and practically helping carry it out.

I will pursue reconciliation when an offense occurs between me and another member. I will refuse to speak or to listen to gossip or slander. I will support the efforts of my church to restore members who have fallen into sin, even if that restoration process involves church discipline.

In other words, we are a family. We're stuck together. If you're committing as a member at Riverview, you're stuck with us! So, as family, we're committing to working through issues that happen between members in a biblical, God-honoring, and reconciling way because the message of the Gospel is a message of reconciliation.

I agree to submit to discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise.

Nobody ever likes to talk about it, but the reality is that many of us get caught in sin. This is a commitment to not turning your back on the biblical process of discipline and reconciliation.

I will promote marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with his church, and bring up any children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

If you're single, this is about pursuing a Godly marriage one day, if you so choose. If you're married, you are all about your relationship with your spouse being a reflection of Jesus and the Church, and that you will raise your children to follow Jesus.

I will support those who my church sends out to proclaim the Gospel in my community and the world.

You will be behind our efforts to start new venues and churches – potentially even go with one, pray for them, serve them, financially support them, etc.

This material may have brought up tons of questions that you need answered, and you may be wondering what happens next.

After you submit your membership form, a pastor or leader from your venue will connect with you to schedule a one-on-one meeting (or one-with-your-spouse) to answer any questions that you have.

We're thrilled that you have decided to become part of our church family! We're glad that you've been coming around as long as you have; whether that's just recently or for a lot of years. We're excited that you are making a commitment to this local body.