

7 Points for New Members

1. Don't be passive. Be active.

7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1Co 12:7 NRS)

Don't sit back and wait to be asked. Jump in. Serve. Use your creativity. Develop your intimacy with God. If you're intimacy with Jesus is lying dormant, then your gifts are lying dormant, and that means that all of us are weaker, because your gifts are given for the common good – not for you alone

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Act 2:42-47 NRS)

Did somebody sit down and come up with a list of things that the ideal Jerusalem Jesus-worshipers would do? Or was it something more natural and inwardly motivated than that?

Desires of a regenerated Heart – (Driscoll, Vintage Church, p. 32) “The longings of a regenerated heart are for his Word, for prayer, for worship, for fellowship with God and his people, for service, for holiness, for witness, and for being home with him in his eternal kingdom.” Distinguish between “passively doing the program” and active discipleship.

2. Support the leadership:

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing-- for that would be harmful to you. (Heb 13:17 NRS)

Don't view “the leadership” as responsible for everything. We're not priests and you're not laity. The elders are leaders, but all of us are priests. The church is not a kind of religious business run by godly professionals who have been keenly trained to provide you with spiritual goods and services.

3. Own it.

Don't think in “They/them.” It's WE.

We're worshipers! That means if there are “goods and services” provided, God is the one we're primarily trying to please! And you are not a “consumer” of religious goods and services. Consumers have preferences. Worshipers offer sacrifices. So when you gather here it is as an active worshiper of God through Jesus by the Spirit, not as a movie-goer who buys a ticket, sits a butt in a seat, and is entertained. I wonder how different this place would be if we stopped asking stupid questions like how we felt about the music and message and asked questions like whether God was pleased with the posture of our own hearts today. If you can't even worship God when you don't like the music, how are you going to worship Him when you've got pancreatic cancer?

4. Be real.

Confess sin and rebuke sin. Walking in the light (1 Jn 1:7) FOR REAL. That's REAL CHURCH.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(1John 1:6-9 NRS)

5. Move through the stages of maturation!

infants, young people, adults – moving from dependence on others to taking responsibility for oneself to care-giving. Never scorn those who are at the infancy or adolescent stage, but rather care for, patiently instruct and encourage their development and growth. Mishler says that if our whole church were at the 3rd stage, we'd be failing at evangelism. A healthy church always has all three stages mixed in.

On taking other along with us – even though it's tougher. Mark Dever's Evangelist friend – "Why would I join the church? They'd just slow me down." They'd slow you down, but you may just speed them up...and what about Jesus' heart for the church? What was his prayer the night before he gave himself for us? It was for the church to be unified and love each other! You know that probably means we ought to be unified and love each other! And you know that probably means that if you don't even want to worship and serve in close relationship with other believers in Jesus that you are out of God's will for your life!

6. Church is NOT an institution; it's people.

Membership is NOT about you committing to an idea, or an institution, or to a 78 point doctrinal statement, but to these people who are all around you right now. You belong to us, and we to you. We're a family. This is a spiritual home of sorts. And family is forever – while special interest groups are for as long as the thing seems worthwhile and cost-benefit satisfactory. You don't reject your children because they're immature – you discipline and instruct them. And we're called to do that for each other here because we want each other to grow up into all that Jesus would have us be. We're not an institution. We're a family. We're God's family.

7. Time, Treasure, Talent

Actual Ceremony

To those joining the fellowship:

- 1.) Do you testify that you are a fallen sinner who has received the grace of God, and – repenting of both your sin and your righteousness – are daily seeking to set your hope fully on His Son Jesus who loved you and gave his very life for you? I do.
- 2.) Do you accept the Holy Scriptures as the very words of God, the final authority for belief and action, and by God's grace are you surrendered to follow their instruction to the best of your ability? I do.
- 3.) Will you seek to pour yourself out in love for Jesus, for His precious blood-bought Church, and for the world he came to save? By God's grace, I will.

To the fellowship in response:

- 1.) Do you recognize the holy charge that our Lord Christ has entrusted to us – to love and disciple his most precious possession – his very own people? We do.
- 2.) If you wish to show that you joyfully receive these before you into the membership of this congregation, please stand at this time.