



IYM Quakers

Session Eight

Membership

MEMBERSHIP



*Becoming a Member
of the Society of Friends*

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- **The Commitment of Membership**
 - **Steps to Membership**

The Commitment of Membership		
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Romans 12:4-5

Membership involves more than having one's name recorded on a church roll. Much as marriage is a binding commitment to live in unity with an imperfect person, church membership involves a commitment to living in community with other believers.

Part of a member's commitment is to protect the unity of the church. We do this by acting in love toward others, by exhibiting a spirit of cooperation, and by refusing to gossip. Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle spoke to this issue in his book, *Fresh Wind Fresh Fire*:

About 20 years ago, I said something impromptu to the new members standing in a row across the front of the church. As we received them, the Holy Spirit prompted me to add, "And now, I charge you that if you ever hear another member speak an unkind word of criticism or slander against anyone—myself, an usher, a choir member, or anyone else—that you stop that person in mid-sentence and say, 'Excuse me—who hurt you? Who ignored you? Who slighted you? Was it Pastor Cymbala? Let's go to his office right now. He'll apologize to you, and then we'll pray together so God can restore peace to this body. But we won't let you talk critically about people who aren't present to defend themselves.'

"I'm serious about this. I want you to help resolve this kind of thing immediately. And know this: If you are ever the one doing the loose talking, we'll confront you."

To this day, every time we receive new members, I say much the same thing. That's because I know what most easily destroys churches. It's not crack cocaine, government oppression, or even lack of funds. Rather it's gossip and slander that grieves the Holy Spirit.

The Commitment of Membership		
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Church members aren't spectators, but active participants in the life of a congregation. Members consider it a personal responsibility to pray for their church and work for its spiritual and numerical growth. Members seek to make their church a welcoming environment for those who would visit, and actively extend that welcome.

Church members view themselves as servants. By cultivating a servant's heart a church member is seeking to discover his or her own gifts, passions and abilities that can be used in service for the Kingdom of God. Members seek to identify at least one area of ministry in their congregation where they can use their gifts. For some this may be a ministry of prayer. Others excel in ministries such as hospitality, teaching, or administration. Church members are more concerned with serving than with being served.

Church members are committed to supporting the testimony of their church. They do this by faithfully attending, by generously giving, and by living a Godly life.

Membership is not to be taken lightly, yet every Christian should consider a committed relationship to a local congregation.

1. Faith is the Basis for Membership

Friends receive into adult membership those whose faith in God and in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord is manifest in their lives and who are in unity with the teachings of Christian truth as held by the Religious Society of Friends (from Faith & Practice of Indiana Yearly Meeting).

2. Application

Application for membership should be requested in writing. Some churches have application forms that can be completed. Others desire a personal request written by the applicant.

3. Ministry & Oversight Consultation

The Ministry and Oversight will arrange for consultation with those who have applied for membership. When it is discerned that the applicant is ready for membership this group will recommend reception of the applicant to the Monthly Meeting.

4. Monthly Meeting Action

Having received the recommendation from Ministry & Oversight, the Monthly Meeting will act upon the request. Those received into membership will have this action recorded in the church's permanent records and will be recognized/welcomed at a regular meeting for worship.



Becoming a Member of the Society of Friends

D. L. Moody was visiting a prominent Chicago citizen when the idea of church membership and involvement came up. "I believe I can be just as good a Christian outside the church as I can be inside it," the man said. Moody said nothing. Instead, he moved to the fireplace, blazing against the winter outside, removed one burning coal, and placed it on the hearth. The two men sat together and watched the ember die out. "I see," the other man said.

It is important for individual Christians to be united and committed to a group of fellow believers with whom they can worship and work together. A commitment to Christ involves a commitment to the people of Christ as well. It is important to affirm that we are committed to one another. Church membership is one way to do this.

Formal Church membership hasn't been emphasized in recent years as it once was, yet there are still compelling reasons to consider this step. Church membership is no substitute for a personal relationship with God, but those with a personal relationship with God are normally drawn into a committed relationship with a local church.

