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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MEMBERSHIP
CURRICULUM AT EMMANUEL INTERNATIONAL
CHURCH OF TERNES IN PARIS, FRANCE

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DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MEMBERSHIP
CURRICULUM AT EMMANUEL INTERNATIONAL
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I dedicate this dissertation to my God-given bride of seventeen years.

You are my best friend, my helpmate, and the love of my life.

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PREFACE

Thank you to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It has been my desire from the day you saved me to proclaim your name to the nations. In you, I have found all that I need for life and godliness.

I also want to thank my wife and children for your constant love and support. One of my greatest joys in life has been advancing the gospel with you all by my side. Every word of this paper has been typed with at least one of you sitting on my lap, asking a question, or playing by my side.

I would also like to thank Dr. Albert Mohler, the administration, and the faculty of Southern Baptist Theological for their investment in my life. Especially, Dr. John Klaassen for the countless hours spent reading and critiquing my work. I never thought I would find myself attending seminary, and I certainly did not expect to go to seminary from Paris, France. I am forever grateful for the convenience, flexibility, and expertise provided by SBTS. There is no greater option for theological studies.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Emmanuel International Church of Ternes (EICT) is a church plant focused on making disciples of Jesus Christ in the multicultural context of Paris, France. Although Paris is known as a tourist destination, Christians often find themselves here for work, education, or challenging circumstances. The duration of their visit ranges from a few days to a few years. A simple online search reveals EICT as an international, Bible preaching church that will welcome individuals, regardless of the duration of their time in Paris, with open arms. Paris is also home to a large population of exclusive English speakers. Most English speakers find EICT online.¹ The congregation of EICT represents, therefore, a population of English speakers living in Paris and a group of individuals that are passing through for an indefinite amount of time. EICT has the unique opportunity to incorporate Christians into the local community of God, build them up in the faith, and train them to make disciples locally and abroad. For this reason, it is essential that a membership curriculum be developed and implemented for the good of the body and to the glory of God.

Context

EICT is the daughter church of Emmanuel International Church of Rueil Malmaison (EICRM). EICT officially began meeting in an Orthodox church building in the 17th arrondissement of Paris in April 2018, thanks to the support of EICRM. Church leadership consists of men from both the EICT and EICRM. Leaders meet weekly to

¹ Emmanuel International Church, accessed July 13, 2019, <https://www.eicparis.org/eic-ternes-paris/>.

discuss goals, ministry related issues, and to pray. After reviewing the progress of the EICT plant, leadership agreed that a church membership curriculum must be developed and implemented for a diverse and transient population of international individuals.

The wisdom, resources, and financial support of the EICRM have been beneficial to EICT. An EICT pastor receives a partial salary from the EICRM, one paid pastor is on staff at EICRM, and one pastoral intern supported by both EICT and EICRM. Members of EICRM consist of former pastors, current missionaries to France, and skilled musicians. Many members of EICRM possess years of experience serving in a cross-cultural setting. Located just outside of Paris, the congregants are diverse and multi-ethnic. Challenges and issues confronted by EICT are not unique to EICRM. The EICT leans heavily on the counsel of the EICRM when wading through the bureaucracy of France and understanding cultural differences in a population.

The advantage that EICT has in comparison to other church plants in Paris is the convenience of its location. EICT is accessible by multiple train lines that intersect the city. An estimated 12 million people in the Paris region may attend a Sunday service or midweek meeting without the need of an automobile. The ease of travel means that EICT welcomes individuals from all over the world. Thirty different nationalities have visited since its inception. Visitors and regular attenders are often students, refugees, or people temporarily located for business. EICT has the opportunity to incorporate these individuals into the local body of Christ. The development of a membership curriculum must include an understanding that all peoples, tongues, tribes, and nations can be united in Christ Jesus.

Church membership curriculum should also stress that believers are called out of this world and a called into the community of God. Christian community and fellowship begin as believers affirm a biblical statement of faith and profess a faith in Jesus Christ. EICT visitors arrive with various theological backgrounds and at different stages of spiritual growth. Unfortunately, many visitors and regular attenders interpret Christianity

to be a personal faith disconnected from church responsibilities. In many cases, church membership is a new concept. The nations are present, but few participate in weekly prayer meetings or church events. There is also a general sense of spectatorship on Sundays as individuals leave church without volunteering to clean-up or organize the chairs after the service. The lack of church participation and the avoidance to volunteer indicate that individual faith trumps the community of faith.

The challenges of a foreigner living in Paris are numerous. Cultural adaptation, language restrictions, visa requirements, and lodging are continued hardships for newcomers. EICT is saturated with individuals looking for personal assistance. The good news is that many individuals at EICT are able to sympathize and answer visitors' questions. The disadvantage arises when the spiritual needs of an individual are overlooked by one's felt needs. The felt needs of a visitor must be addressed, but Christians must be equipped to discern one's spiritual condition. Church membership curriculum must provide instruction on evangelism and discipleship. Future EICT members must be able to shift conversations from the secular to a spiritual conversation. The evangelistic tools included in church membership curriculum would allow EICT members to use felt needs as a doorway to the proclamation of the gospel. Furthermore, the implementation of church membership would include church ordinances. Believer's baptism, for example, would include the sharing of a personal testimony. A testimony would allow individual members to communicate the truths of the gospel to those in attendance.

EICT has also encountered a large number of sporadic attenders. Leaders struggle to shepherd a flock who appears non-committal and adverse to accountability and discipleship. The anonymity provided by living in a large city has filtered into the church. Individuals come and go as they please without fully engaging with the body. Weeks or months may pass without seeing or hearing from some individuals. Suddenly, a person will reappear as if their presence was not needed nor expected. A church

membership curriculum at EICT needs to communicate full commitment to the family of God. It would highlight the expectations and responsibilities of its members and encourage the flock to hold one another accountable in his or her Christian walk.

Leadership would be better equipped to build up future leaders when church membership curriculum is regularly implemented at EICT. Membership identifies the flock and permits leaders to shepherd. Members of EICT would take priority over spectators with no desire to commit to a church. A membership course permits leaders to encourage membership at EICT. Almost daily, new individuals arrive in Paris looking for a church. There must be multiple opportunities throughout the year to join the church. Insights to an individual's giftedness, availability, needs, and spiritual growth are all benefits that a leader may obtain through a church membership course.

The development and implementation of church membership at EICT creates the opportunity to send off members to their next destination in life. According to the leadership of EICRM, there must be a time allocated each year to send members back to their country of origin. Students complete a semester of school during the months of December and June. Businessmen and women are notified months before the date of their departure. Refugees and those who have immigrated to France often encounter various circumstances that require them to leave the city. Church membership permits members to go to the nations as an extension of the local church until a new church is found in their next host country.

The inconsistency of a member's time in France gives leadership a sense of urgency when equipping the flock. There is no time to waste when it comes to equipping the saints to do the work of ministry. A large percentage of church members spend a limited amount of time at EICT, but the investment made by the church will have a global impact on the world. Equipping members of EICT is literally equipping the nations to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Rationale

Christians are those who have been called out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. Those who belong to the kingdom of light are identified as Christ's universal church. The universal church are collective members of the local church that identify themselves as followers of Jesus, set apart from this world, and committed to living in a kingdom where Christ is Lord.² Jonathan Leeman rightly concludes, "To be a Christian is to belong to a church."³ The creation and implementation of a one-day church membership course divided into six lessons permits the diverse population of Paris, France, to identify themselves as members of the local body of Christ.

The development and implementation of church membership at EICT would stress the importance of identifying with Christ and his church. Membership is especially advantageous to Christians living in a foreign land. The Bible refers to Christians as sojourners (1 Pet 2:11). Christians are not of this world but are in the world (John 17:16). Through Jesus, believers have become citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). Christians should expect to be uncomfortable, even in the most visited city in the world. The church membership curriculum would identify heavenly citizens that make up the local church and stress that all are one in Christ Jesus.

Unity in word and deeds would be included in church membership curriculum at EICT. Members of Christ's church must testify to the day that God granted them repentance and faith. Personal testimonies unite believers in the truths of the gospel and God's work of salvation. Unity would be exemplified as potential members share their testimony to the church during a Sunday service. Unity is also strengthened in believers'

² I am aware that not all denominations agree with this definition. Lutheranism, for example, would add liturgy and lectionary to this definition. The United Methodist Church would include personal choice in addition to God's calling on one's life.

³ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), chap. 2, para.1, Kindle.

baptism. Those participating in a membership course would be challenged to obey God's call to be baptized, if they have not already, as a public profession of their faith.

Participating in communion would unite the church as together they proclaim the Lord's death. Also, a statement of faith for the EICT would be explained and agreed upon by all who desire church membership. A statement of faith would ensure that all member of EICT affirm the essentials of the faith.

The EICT is not a Sunday social club allowing some to practice their English and others to receive assistance with their visa. The development and implementation of church membership curriculum has the potential to produce fully engaged Christians living for Jesus. Members of EICT would be challenged to live a life of holiness and to participate in Christian accountability and biblical exhortation.

Missionaries in the New Testament were sent to the nations by the local church (Acts 13). Leadership at EICT may send out their members as an extension of the local body and in obedience to the Great Commission. EICT has already seen multiple people return to their country of origin during the short time of its existence. The development of a church membership curriculum must include an explanation of the Great Commission. Since EICT is a relatively new church plant, sending out departing members is a great way to splice biblical missions into the DNA of the church.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a church membership curriculum for Emmanuel International Church of Ternes in Paris, France.

Goals

The goals established for this project reflect a desire to be unified with church leadership in the creation of curriculum content. It is also important for regular attenders to understand and value church membership at EICT. A curriculum was developed and implemented that united the diversity that exists and affirmed essential doctrine.

1. The first goal was to assess the convictions of a pastoral panel on essential content and practical matters that must be considered in membership curriculum for an international church.
2. The second goal was to develop six lessons based upon the agreed upon components of membership by a pastoral panel that will lead to church membership.
3. The third goal was to partner with a member of the pastoral panel to teach a four-week sermon series on church membership to promote church-wide participation in the implementation stage of the church membership course.
4. The fourth goal was to implement the curriculum and increase the biblical knowledge of participants taking the course.

The research methodology and instruments used in this project aided in the success of this project. Measurements were applied and appropriate. Benchmarks were created and accomplished for positive results.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the convictions of a pastoral panel on essential components that must be included in membership curriculum in an international church setting.⁴ This goal was measured by administering the Essentials in International Church Membership Inventory (EICMI) to a pastoral panel.⁵ This inventory includes three parts: EICMI functionality, EICMI content, and EICMI action steps. The EICT and EICRM pastors were surveyed regarding necessary components that should be included in church membership curriculum.⁶ This goal was considered successfully met when the pastoral panel completed the EICMI and the inventory was analyzed, yielding a clearer picture of the necessary components to be included in church membership curriculum.

⁴ All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

⁵ See appendix 1.

⁶ The pastoral panel includes the senior pastor of EICRM, pastoral intern of EICT, and senior pastor of EICT.

The second goal of this project was to develop six lessons based upon the agreed upon components of membership by a pastoral panel that led to church membership. This goal was measured as well by the pastoral panel who utilized a rubric designed to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and scope of the curriculum.⁷ This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded sufficiency. If the 90 percent benchmark was not initially met, the material was revised until it met the standard.

The third goal was to partner with a member of the pastoral panel to teach a four-week sermon series on church membership to promote church-wide participation during the implementation stage of the church membership course. Two of the sermons in the four-week series were preached by a member of the pastoral panel. This goal was measured by the voluntary participation of the membership course by regular attenders. This goal was considered successfully met when the four-week sermon series was completed and ten participants (one third of regular attenders) signed up for the membership course.

The fourth goal was to implement the curriculum and increase the biblical knowledge of participants taking the course. This goal was measured by administering a pre- and post-survey to gauge the participants' understanding of the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps towards church membership.⁸ For participants who choose to be anonymous, a four-digit code was permitted for identification. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between pre- and post-survey assessment scores.

⁷ See appendix 2.

⁸ See appendix 3.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms are used in the ministry project:

Baptism. This project uses this term to describe the full immersion of a believer into a body of water. Donald Campbell explains that the act of baptism “symbolizes the believer’s identification with Christ in His burial, death, and resurrection.”⁹ Ryrie states that baptism is reserved for those “who have exercised faith in Christ and thus have been made members of God’s family.”¹⁰

Church member. This project uses the definition provided by Jonathan Leeman: “A church member is a person who has been officially and publicly recognized as a Christian before the nations, as well as someone who shares in the same authority of officially affirming and overseeing other Christians in his or her church.”¹¹

Communion. This term is used to describe the partaking of bread and wine (grape juice) together as a church to symbolize the proclamation of Christ’s death and an individual’s membership in Christ’s body.¹²

Congregationalism. This term is used to describe the responsibilities of the local church congregation. The responsibilities, as defined by Mark Dever, include matters of discipline, membership, excommunication, matters of doctrine and the selection of leaders.¹³

Ethnocentrism. This project uses the definition provided by Zane Pratt: “Viewing and judging other cultures by one’s own culture, believing one’s own culture to

⁹ Donald K. Campbell, foreword to Craig Bubeck, Sr., ed., *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1991), 190.

¹⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), chap. 8, para. 7.

¹¹ Leeman, *Church Membership*, chap. 1, para. 12.

¹² Leeman, *Church Membership*, chap. 3, para. 6.

¹³ Mark Dever, *The Church* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2012), xxiv.

be the center of the ethnic universe.”¹⁴

Globalization. This term, as defined by Max Stackhouse, “is the act of making something global, worldwide, in scope and application. In the secular world, this process of making something worldwide often refers to the spread of economic and cultural realities generally associated with the capitalist, free-market forces of the industrialized West.”¹⁵

Intercultural competence. This project uses the definition provided by Evelyn and Richard Hibbert: “The ability to respond and relate effectively towards a variety of cultures.”¹⁶

Local church. This project specifically addresses church membership as it is relevant to the local church and, as defined by Bruce Fisk: “A localized manifestation of the church universal.”¹⁷

Ordinances. This term is understood as a reference to communion and baptism. These ordinances are, as Charles Ryrie explains, “an outward rite prescribed by Christ to be performed by His church.”¹⁸

Two-Thirds World. This term is used to represent Asia, Africa and Latin America. The definition is used by Duane Elmer, which he adopted from Paul Hiebert.¹⁹

¹⁴ Zane Pratt, *Introduction to Global Missions* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2014), 26.

¹⁵ Max L. Stackhouse, *The Local Church in a Global Era: Reflections for a New Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 93.

¹⁶ Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert, *Leading Multicultural Teams* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2014), chap. 2, sec. “Implications of Cultural Differences for Team Leaders”, para. 1, Kindle.

¹⁷ Bruce N. Fisk, “Body of Christ,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 73, Logos Bible Software.

¹⁸ Ryrie, *A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, chap. 8, para. 1.

¹⁹ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 182. See also Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 9.

Universal church. This term is used to describe all members of Christ's church whom are the visible representation of the body of Christ on earth. Greg Allison notes, "The people of God who have been saved through repentance and faith in Christ and incorporated into his body through baptism with the Spirit . . . composed of all Christians both in heaven and on earth."²⁰

Two limitations applied to this project. First, the accuracy of the pre- and post-series surveys was dependent upon the willingness of the respondents to be honest about their knowledge and understanding of the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps toward church membership. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents were promised that their answers would remain nameless. Second, the effectiveness of the training was limited by the constancy of attendance. If the participants did not attend all of the lessons then it would be difficult to measurement the knowledge gained from the course. To mitigate this limitation, food, drink, and childcare were provided for the entire afternoon.

Three delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project addressed membership in an international church and not an American church. International churches face different challenges that an American church might not need to address. Second, the project was confined to a twenty-three-week timeframe. This gave adequate time to prepare and teach six lessons and conduct the post-series survey after sessions were completed. Finally, this project was limited to those participating in the membership class and not to the general population of the church.

²⁰ Gregg R. Allison, *Compact Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), s.v. "universal church."

Conclusion

God has placed EICT in a strategic location to equip the nations to reach the nations. The development and implementation of a church membership curriculum represents the beginning of this godly endeavor. The following chapters show the necessity of church membership. Specifically, chapter 2 of this project identifies the biblical and theological importance of church membership and what must be included in church membership curriculum.

CHAPTER 2
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR
DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Five passages from both Testaments reveal that God calls his children out of the world and into membership in the local body of Christ and uses the local church as the primary means of spiritual growth and gospel mission.

**Members of God's Covenants and People
of God's Promises (Hos 1:10-2:1)**

Hosea 1:10-2:1 reaffirms the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants given to Israel. The Abrahamic covenant reveals the promise that God made to his children to multiply them throughout the earth. This promise provides a future hope for a rebellious people under God's judgment. God, through Hosea, also announces a Davidic Messiah. This promised leader would unite his people and separate them from the world.¹

**A Distinct People in Relation
to the World (1:10-2:1)**

There is a clear distinction in the Scriptures between the children of God and those who are not children of God. In Genesis 12, God chose Abram from among many to bless the nations. From Abraham, the nation of Israel was established to be a light to the nations (Isa 49:6). In contrast, the surrounding nations were known to worship false gods. Hosea 1:1-9 indicates that Israel was no longer distinct from the world. Israel's idolatry and rebellion resembled the surrounding nations, which provoked a rebuke from God

¹ While the New Testament makes a sufficient case for church membership, the Old Testament is far from silent in regard to God's ultimate plan to gather the nations. Although God's plan to save both Jews and Gentiles through Christ can be argued beginning from the garden forward, Hosea 1:10-2:1 offers a precise link between the gathering of the nations and membership into the church universal.

through the prophet Hosea. Hosea 1:2 indicates Israel had forsaken the Lord. God then makes a distinction between groups: One was either with God or not with God. According to Hosea 1:9, Israel was not God's people because God was not their God. Verse 10, however, takes an abrupt change by referencing the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 22:17).² The Abrahamic covenant is the hope of the children of God and the clear promise that separates God's children from the world. Through the Abrahamic covenant, God changes the name "you are not my people" (lō- 'am-mî 'at-tem) to "sons of the living God" (bā-nê 'êl- ḥāy). Douglas Stuart comments that "living God" can be contrasted with dumb, motionless idols found in Isaiah 40:18-20; 41:5-7; 44:9-20; and 46:5-11.³ In other words, those who have rejected God and followed after worthless idols are in opposition against those who follow the one true God. The world worships idols and rejects the one true God, but God promised Abraham he would be the father of many nations (Gen 17:4). To be called "sons of the living God" is a reminder that God keeps his promises. According to Duane Garrett, Israel has regained their status as God's chosen people.⁴

Hosea 1:11 states, "And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together." The countless gathering of God's children in the midst of a sinful world is continually affirmed in the Scriptures. Stuart affirms, "The motif of an eventual innumerable progeny is central to the patriarchal promise accounts in Genesis (13:16; 15:5; 22:17; 26:24, 28:14, 32:12) and to the covenantal restoration of those promises in the sanctions passages (Lev 26:9, 45; Deut 30:5)."⁵ Furthermore, the gathering of God's

² The English translation of Hosea 1:10 equals 2:1 in the Hebrew translation of the Scriptures.

³ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 38.

⁴ Duane Garrett, *Hosea-Joel*, The New American Commentary, vol. 19A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), chap. 1, sec. 2.3, para. 8, Kindle.

⁵ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 37.

people far exceeds one's expectations. The apostle Paul linked Hosea's words to the conversion of Gentiles through the gospel (Rom 9:22-26).⁶ The Abrahamic covenant, therefore, includes both Jewish and Gentile converts.

God's people are not granted membership into the family of God through birthright or citizenship. Hosea is indicating that God's family will be gathered and united by their faith in Jesus Christ. God's people will be gathered out of the world and under the rule of the Davidic king. M. Daniel Carroll confirms that the "ancient promises" of God, such as the Davidic covenant, provide an eschatological hope in the "future Davidic king" that will restore one's relationship with God.⁷ Jesus as the "one head" (rōš 'e-ḥāḏ) of a gathered Judah and Israel is supported by Hosea 3:5. Hosea identifies Israel's king as "David." J. E. Smith comments, "The reference must be to Christ, the greater son of David."⁸ The Davidic covenant alludes to a time where both Jew and Gentile will be united as one as the body of Christ. Derek Kidner links Hosea to the "joy that drew Jesus to the cross, 'to die . . . not for the nation only, but to gather into one' (*cf.* our verse 11) 'the children of God who are scattered abroad' (Jn. 11:52)."⁹ The Davidic covenant, therefore, is another example of God's children being distinct from this world by the eschatological hope of Jesus Christ.

Through the Abrahamic covenant all the nations will be blessed (Gen 18:18), which has always been the plan of God, and Hosea confirms this truth. Stuart concludes that it is Jesus who initiates the great day of Jezreel. Jezreel (yiz-rə-'el) means "God

⁶ James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), ch. 15, sec. D, para. 2. Kindle.

⁷ Daniel M. Carroll, *Hosea*, in vol. 13 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), chap. 2, sec A3, para. 6, Kindle.

⁸ Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, chap. 15, sec. D, para. 4.

⁹ Derek Kidner, *The Message of Hosea*, The Bible Speaks Today Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 25.

sows.”¹⁰ D. A. Hubbard believes this word is deliberately used as an ambiguous term meant to represent judgment and restoration.¹¹ Smith concurs, “God’s scattering in judgment now becomes God’s sowing for growth. The allusion is to the previous verse and to the great growth of the people of God in the messianic age (1:11).”¹² Through Hosea, God alludes that restoration is possible not only for Israel, but for the nations. Stuart comments that Jezreel “refers not just to Israelites being restored to God, but to the fact that people who never could have made such a claim, now, by reason of Christ’s sacrifice for the whole world, have the potential of joining with God’s people.”¹³ The nations may escape the same judgement reserved for Israel and be known as “children of the living God” because it was always God’s intentions to reach the nations through Christ.

Finally, those who previously had no mercy and were not considered God’s people (Hos 1:6-9) are to recognize their distinct relationship with God and one another. Stuart notes the grammatical significance of Hosea 2:1: “The plural imperative ‘say’ (אמרו) has an unspecified subject, though there can be little doubt that the people of the future, reunited Israel and Judah, are those who are to speak these words to one another.”¹⁴ God has remained true to his promises as found in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant and his people are to recognize, as Smith observes, their distinct and special relationship with God.¹⁵ Stuart comments that the work of Christ, through the church, fulfills this

¹⁰ Robert L. Thomas, *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*, updated ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation, 1998), ref. no. 3157, Logos Bible Software.

¹¹ David A. Hubbard, *Hosea*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 76.

¹² Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, chap. 15, sec. D, para.6.

¹³ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 40.

¹⁴ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 40.

¹⁵ Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, chap. 15, sec. D, para. 7.

salvation oracle today and recognizes Christ's body as the "innumerable people whom the living God has made his children (Rom 9:24-26)."¹⁶ Stuart writes, "Those who are in Christ constitute Abraham's seed, of whom this prediction of great growth was made; and the church inherits what God had prepared for Abraham's seed, thereby fulfilling God's promise (Gal 3:29)."¹⁷

The Body of Christ Represented by Followers of Christ (1 Pet 2:4-10)

First Peter 2:4-10 shows that God unites the church in his son Jesus Christ. Those who are in Christ have received the Holy Spirit and are joined with Christ, who bestows to his children all of the blessings that belong to him. Peter shows the corporate implications of believers and the corporate responsibilities of those who trust in Christ.

Spirit-Filled Believers United by Faith

First Peter 2:4 begins with believers who have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who "come to him" (Jesus) are those who have "tasted that the Lord is good" (v. 3). Peter Davids explains that the phrase "come to him" in the LXX is linked to a conversion to Christianity.¹⁸ Individuals, through repentance and faith, have "come" to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life (Isa 1:18). The implications of coming to Christ, according to Wayne Grudem, extend far beyond salvation. The verb "come to him" (προσέρχομαι) can also mean to "draw near" or to "hear God speak" in the LXX (Lev 9:5; Deut 4:11, 5:27). This verb has also been used to enter the tabernacle and offer God a sacrifice (Exod 12:48, 16:9; Lev 9:7-8, 10:4-5).¹⁹

¹⁶ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 40.

¹⁷ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 40.

¹⁸ Peter Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), chap. 9, sec 2.4, para. 13, Kindle.

¹⁹ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 103.

God is gathering the nations by saving individuals who then draw near to Christ with a heart of worship.

There is a profound connection between Jesus and his followers, which can be seen as Peter compares and contrasts believers with the person of Jesus Christ. Edmund Clowney confirms, “The status of Christians depends upon the status of Christ, for they are joined to him.”²⁰ Christ is identified as the “Living Stone” (λιθον ζωντα) (2:4a); believers are like “living stones” (ως λιθοι ζωντες) (2:4b); Jesus is also referred to as the cornerstone (κεφαλην γωνιας) (2:6). The cornerstone is considered “chosen” (*eklekton*) and “honored” (*entimon*).” These words are in contrast to followers of Jesus who are “never to be shamed” (μη καταισχυθη). Furthermore, Christ followers in verse 9 are a “chosen race” (εκλεκτος γενος). Grudem explains the word *chosen* “would suggest a sharing in the blessings of God’s ‘chosen’ people in the Old Testament, as well as a sharing in the privileged status of Christ, the ‘chosen’ rock (1 Pet. 2:4, 6).”²¹ Followers of Jesus have been chosen out of the world to know and worship Jesus. Believers are no longer of the world, but in Christ (John 15:19). There is, therefore, an individual relationship in Christ where everything that Christ has obtained has been granted to the individual believer by repentance and faith. The individual, however, belongs to the family of God (Eph 2:11-13, 2:19, 3:6; Rom 11:17-24).

Peter uses language that indicates a life in Christ is a life united with other believers. The individual relationship one has with Christ has universal implications. Thomas Schreiner notes the “spiritual house” (οικος πνευματικος) (2:5) Peter is referencing is spiritual “because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.”²² God

²⁰ Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 83.

²¹ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 117.

²² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 105.

grants his children the Holy Spirit to universally unite all who have placed their trust in Christ—the cornerstone of the “spiritual house.” Believers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation have been gathered together through God’s Spirit as the representation of God’s universal church (Rev 7:9).

The universal church shares a unified purpose in God’s house. Schreiner observes, “When the verb ‘build’ (*οἰκοδομέω*) is combined with ‘house’ (*οἶκος*) in the Septuagint, the temple is often in view.”²³ The fact that the Old Testament temple is in view is supported by Peter’s reference to “a royal priesthood” (v. 9). In God’s temple, there were priests purposed to do the work of the Lord. God, therefore, saves individuals in Jesus Christ, unites them with his Spirit, and gives them a priestly role to fulfill. Schreiner correctly notes that there is a corporate aspect to this text as God sanctifies believers for a priestly role in God’s new temple, the church.²⁴

God is building his church. God set apart Israel according to his perfect plan and sovereign election. Israel was chosen by God as the surrounding nations were characterized by their rejection of God. First Peter 2:7 is a citation of Psalm 118:22. Schreiner notes the rejected stone in context was the Davidic king. The builders represented the foreign nations “that rejected the rule of the anointed king of Israel.”²⁵ Although both Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 relate to the Jews as the group who “rejected” (*ἀπεδοκίμασαν*) and stumble (*προσκοπέουσιν*) after encountering the cornerstone, 1 Peter 2:8 indicates that those who “disobey the word” (*τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες*) are addressed. Schreiner clarifies, “The “message” (*λόγῳ*) here is the gospel—the same word God uses as a seed to beget new life (cf. 1:23–25; cf. 3:1).”²⁶ In other words, there are two groups

²³ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 105.

²⁴ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 106.

²⁵ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 111.

²⁶ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 112.

of people in this world. Karen Jobes states, “The rejecters are any and all people, whether Jew or Gentile, who reject Christ.”²⁷ These individuals are not members of God’s universal church. Verse 9, however, indicates that those who have not rejected Christ are “chosen” (ἐκλεκτόν) by God. The universal church, therefore, is made up of God’s elect who affirm the good news of Jesus Christ as Lord.

First Peter 2:9 states, “You are a chosen race” (γένος ἐκλεκτόν), which echoes the words of Isaiah 43:21. Jobes explains, “The term γένος refers to people descended from a common lineage, in the case of Isa. 43 the descendants of Abraham.”²⁸ Grudem adds,

God’s chosen people are no longer said to be those physically descended from Abraham, for Christians are now the true ‘chosen race’ (v. 9). The nation blessed by God is no longer the nation of Israel, for Christians are now God’s true ‘holy nation’ (v. 9). The people of Israel are no longer said to be the people of God, for Christians—both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians—are now ‘God’s people’ (v. 10a) and those who have ‘received mercy’ (v. 10b).²⁹

In Christ, believers have the promise of Abraham and corporate responsibility to proclaim 1 Peter 2:9: “The excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς). This is the only way that an individual can come to a saving faith and into God’s universal church.

The Community of God (Acts 2:42-47)

Acts 2:42-47 shows that individuals saved by God will attach themselves to the community of faith. The Christian life is meant to be lived in Christian community. The community of God will meet regularly, joyfully, and with purpose. The unity exemplified by believers will be a testimony of the goodness of God to the outside world.

²⁷ Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), chap. 2, sec. C-1c, para. 8, Kindle.

²⁸ Jobes, *1 Peter*, chap. 2, sec. C-2a, para. 1.

²⁹ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 119.

Christians Do Life Together

Luke presents key elements practiced by the early church and reveals that the Christian life is meant to be lived in Christian community. The community of God met regularly. The content of their meetings is summarized in four areas: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread together, and prayer. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider note that the verb “προσκαρτερέω” emphasizes the persistent and submissive *perseverance* and *tenaciousness* of a self-enclosed group collectively oriented toward specific goals.”³⁰ Members of God's universal church came together regularly as members of the local church to learn, grow, love, and to intercede for one another. God did not call out his elect from the world to live separate from other Christians. God instead purposed the universal church to unite as the local church for the good of his children and the glory of his name.

The early church came together to receive apostolic teaching (τῆ διδαχῆ τῶν ἀποστόλων). John Polhill interprets the apostolic teaching to include the “resurrection, the Old Testament Scriptures, the Christian witness, and sure their own reminiscences of Jesus' earthly ministry and teachings.”³¹ The local church, therefore, is comprised of individual believers committed to hearing and following the Scriptures. C. K. Barrett confirms, “The steady persistence in the apostles' teaching means (a) that the Christians listened to the apostles whenever they taught and (b) that they assiduously practised what they heard.”³² The Word of God brings together the people of God and instructs God's people on how to live. Darrell Bock writes that teaching in Acts 2:42 “likely would have included all kinds of instruction like what we see in the Gospels and Epistles: ethical and practical

³⁰ Horst R. Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), s.v. “προσκαρτερέω.”

³¹ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 118.

³² C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 163.

teaching and a grounding in the central promise God had given in Jesus.”³³ Hence, the local church seeks to live as Christ lived and affirms the gospel as the only hope for humanity.

According to Polhill, the Greek word for fellowship (κοινωνία) “is one Paul often employed, but it appears only here in all of Luke-Acts. Its basic meaning is “association, communion, fellowship, close relationship.”³⁴ F. F. Bruce connects verses 44-45 as the expressions of fellowship.³⁵ Members of the universal church met together locally as members of Christ’s community. The implications of being a member of the local community of God is the close relationships formed between fellow believers in Jesus. The closeness of fellow members is evident by the actions of the community. The local community of God identified the physical and material needs of the church and sought to help. The material possessions (τὰ κτήματα) of the community and the belongings (τὰς ὑπάρξεις) of fellow Christians were sold to meet the greater needs of the local community of God. Polhill notes the imperfect construction of the two verbs used in verse 45, “selling” (ἐπίπρασκον) and “distributing” (διεμέριζον), are imperfect, indicating that “this was a recurrent, continuing practice: their practice was to sell their property and goods and apportion the proceeds whenever a need arose.”³⁶ There is no indication that the Christian life, along with the personal possessions of life, are independent from the local community of God.

The expression of the early church being “together” (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) in verse 44 is linked to “all who believed” (πάντες οἱ πιστεύοντες). The local church consists of those who exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One’s faith serves as a prerequisite to

³³ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), chap. 2 sec. C, para. 2, Kindle.

³⁴ Polhill, *Acts*, 118.

³⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 72.

³⁶ Polhill, *Acts*, 121.

membership into the local community of God. Barrett confirms the phrase “all who believed,” “signifies the union of the Christian body.”³⁷ There is no indication that the Christian life is to be lived apart from other believers, and faith in Jesus translates to membership into the community of faith.

The early church met together regularly in both the temple and in homes. Believers met together in the temple (τῷ ἱερῷ) likely for public worship (v. 42) and in their homes (οἶκον) for the breaking of bread (κλῶντές ἄρτον). I. Howard Marshall believes it is normal for Christian worship to occur in the temple as believers have “a true relationship with God through the Messiah.”³⁸ It is important that believers meet together for the purpose of public worship. Bruce notes that prayer was a part of visiting the temple as the apostles attended Jewish prayer services (cf. 3:1).³⁹ Again, prayer was done together as a corporate body. When believers met in homes, Luke describes what they did together and the attitude of the Christian community. Polhill comments, “In the intimacy of the home setting, a common meal was shared together. . . . It was a time marked by rejoicing in their fellowship with one another and with the Spirit and by their own openness and sincerity (ἀφελότητι).”⁴⁰ The Christian community, therefore, joyfully opened up all aspects of their lives and were purposeful in their time together, both publicly and in private.

The unity of the Christian community served as a witness for Christ. Barrett explains, “αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεόν gives a specific direction to the ἀγαλλίασις of v. 46, and ἔχοντες χάριν πρὸς ὅλον τὸν λαόν underlines the innocence claimed in that verse by the

³⁷ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 173.

³⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1980), 90.

³⁹ Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 73.

⁴⁰ Polhill, *Acts*, 121.

word ἀφελότης: the people recognized them as a pious group.”⁴¹ Furthermore, as Keener notes, it would not have been out of ordinary for Greeks to share a meal together as a family, but to observe both men and women together with different families would have certainly been noticed by those in Jerusalem.⁴² The unity expressed by the local church is one of family. Each member of the local body of Christ enjoys the advantages of membership into the community, and this extraordinary behavior is in contrast to the world without Christ.

Finally, the local church consists of those “who were being saved” (σωζομένου). God saves sinners and only those who were saved became members of the community of God. The local church serves as a place of refuge for those God has called out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved son (Col 1:13). A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ will attach themselves to the local community of God.

Members Growing Together (1 Cor 5:1-13)

First Corinthians 5:1-13 shows that God uses the local church for the purpose of growing in holiness. The apostle Paul charges the church in Corinth to remove a man who professes Christ, yet he is continually practicing sin. It is the church’s responsibility to assemble and corporately judge this sin. Because the church is to be holy, this man must be removed from church fellowship. The reason for excommunication is for the good of both the church and the man in question.

Eradicating Sin from the Church

The apostle Paul discovered a man in the church at Corinth who was in a sexual relationship with his stepmother. Thomas Schreiner notes that the present tense of the verb “is having” (ἔχειν) suggests the man’s sinful relationship was an ongoing

⁴¹ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 171.

⁴² Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 1:1007.

relationship.⁴³ Paul does not address consequences for the woman in this relationship which may indicate she did not belong to the church. Anthony Thiselton notes the concern shifting “from *περὶ ὑμῶν*, *about you* (1:10) to *ἐν ὑμῖν*, among you.”⁴⁴ The man is one that is “among” other believers in the church. He is a member of the local church body in Corinth. His ongoing sin, therefore, must not be ignored as it affects the entire church. Members of Christ’s church identify with Christ and are called out of this world to a life of holiness. A member of Christ’s church being in sin will stunt the spiritual growth of the entire flock.

Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner comments that a failure to remove the man in question from fellowship “invites the possibility of judgment from God on the whole group.”⁴⁵ Christianity is a corporate faith. Members of the local church must consider their actions and the affects they will have on the group as a whole. Paul is not present in Corinth, yet he indicates that he is with the church as they assemble to pronounce judgment on the member in sin. God has called the church in Corinth out of the world to be a chosen people, a holy priesthood, and holy nation (1 Pet 2:9). The man’s conduct, therefore, was contrary to the overall plan of God and must be judged by the church. Paul’s judgment was to deliver him to Satan. This is not an example of the church damning a member to hell; rather, the goal is the ultimate repentance of a church member in sin for the good of the church. Leon Morris confirms this view as he refers to the man’s punishment as “remedial” and not a death sentence.⁴⁶ Willful sin, however, was not to

⁴³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *I Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (London: Inter-Varsity, 2018), 108.

⁴⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 385.

⁴⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 201.

⁴⁶ Leon Morris, *I Corinthians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1985), 90.

remain in the church. The local church was to assemble in the name of Jesus and institute a unanimous judgment on a member of the church with the hope the he would repent. The man in question, David Garland concludes, had come under the control of the “flesh,” resulting in his own personal agenda above the mission and reputation of the church.⁴⁷ Members of the local body who are committed to a life of sin are not pursuing personal holiness nor exemplifying the integrity of the gospel. It is the responsibility of fellow members to pronounce judgement on members in sin.

The church in Corinth failed to comprehend the dangers of sin and the effect sin would have on the spiritual growth of others and the gospel mission of the church. Paul provides clarity by comparing sin to “a little leaven” and the church as the “whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6). Thiselton comments, “It is more important to note the emphatic position of μικρά, little.”⁴⁸ Sins that are considered minor or small can taint the entirety of the church. God’s church is to be pure or “unleavened.” The church will not grow to be mature in Christ if sin is allowed to grow unhindered (Col 1:28). The reference to the Passover alludes to the cleansing of Christ’s church through his perfect sacrifice (Exod 12:15). Morris confirms, “The death of Christ had delivered them from slavery to evil and made them the people of God.”⁴⁹ The church has been made new by the grace of God and is responsible for the removal of sin for the sake of the gospel. Members of God’s church consist of those who have died to sin (Rom 6:2). A church that allows sin to remain in its midst hinders a congregation’s witness to the gospel.

God calls his church to be holy. Individuals who confess a faith in Christ, yet their lives resemble the wretched sins of the outside world, should be removed from the church. The ethical discourse in verses 9-13, which follows Paul’s theological discourse

⁴⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), chap. 5, sec. A, para. 51, Kindle.

⁴⁸ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 402.

⁴⁹ Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 91.

in verses 6-8, highlights six sins that must be eliminated from the church if exemplified by a professing believer: sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, reviling, drunkenness, and swindling. These six sins are not meant to be exclusive. Rather, the theological misunderstandings of the Corinthians have affected the overall behavior of the church community. Jeff de Waal Dryden explains, “The purpose of the ethical discourse is to exhort and command- to reshape and reinforce behaviors that, at least in Paul’s understanding, reflect the norms of Christian communal life.”⁵⁰ It is important to note, however, that these characteristics noted by Paul, as well as the consequences of exemplifying these characteristics, are limited to those who continually practice sin with no signs of genuine repentance.⁵¹ It is also significant to understand that believers are not called to distance themselves from the world. Paul is clearly addressing those who “bear the name of brother” (1 Cor 5:11). The integrity of the Lord’s church is at stake as those inside the church should not morally resemble those outside of the church. Schreiner correctly links verse 13 to God’s commands in Deuteronomy for Israel to “purge the evil from among you” (Deut 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7; cf. Deut. 13:5).⁵² Paul places the responsibility on the church as it is the church’s responsibility to pursue holiness.

Church Members Multiply (Eph 4:11-16)

Ephesians 4:11-16 shows that God uses members of the local church to fulfill the mission of the church. God has granted gifted leaders to invest in the body of Christ so that they may grow to full maturity in Christ. Furthermore, every believer has been

⁵⁰ Jeff de Waal Dryden, *A Hermeneutic of Wisdom: Recovering the Formative Agency of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), 182.

⁵¹ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 413.

⁵² Schreiner, *I Corinthians*, 116.

gifted by God for the purpose of making disciples of the nations. Spiritual growth and the advance of the gospel does not occur detached from the local body of Christ.

Spiritual Gifts Used Wisely

Francis Foulkes writes, “In his wisdom, and to make each dependent on others, God has ordained not uniformity, but an endless variety of gifts for members of the body.”⁵³ Although the list of leadership gifts mentioned in verse 11 are not exhaustive, the apostle Paul identifies apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers as gifted leaders God gives to the church. These gifts are meant to equip, serve, and build up the diverse people of God known as the body of Christ.⁵⁴ God’s people, with all of their differences, have been gifted by God and given to the church as a gift from God.

The noun “equipping” (καταρτισμός) is only used here in the New Testament, yet the verb form is found in multiple texts. Foulkes explains,

(T)he corresponding verb is used of repairing something (Matt. 4:21); of God’s bringing the universe in the beginning into its intended shape and order (Heb. 11:3); and of restoring to spiritual health a person who has fallen (Gal. 6:1). It may be used, however, of ‘perfecting’ (AV) what is lacking in the faith of Christians (cf. 1 Thess. 3:10; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 5:10).⁵⁵

Although there is ambiguity in the definition, a gifted leader’s purpose is to use his or her gifts for the church. One may conclude that equipping assumes that there is something that a believer does not have yet can be obtained by those who possess it. Spiritual gifts are to be used, therefore, to disciple the church and to make disciples of the nations. Each member is to grow toward maturity in Christ and to advance the gospel of Christ. The mission of the church cannot be accomplished separated from the local body of Christians.

⁵³ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989), 121.

⁵⁴ Paul mentions in 1 Cor 12:4, 28 the variety of gifts and specifically the gifts of healing, helping, administration, and of tongues.

⁵⁵ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 126.

Ernest Best makes an interesting observation about the phrase “service” (διακονία): “In the light of its use by Jesus (Mk 9:33–6; 10:42–5) and the early church, it gives no support to a claim to self-importance.”⁵⁶ Individual giftedness, therefore, should never be a source of pride. A person’s giftedness originates from God and must be used as a service to the community of God. Gifted leaders are to serve the church and focus on accomplishing the overall mission of the church to make disciples (Matt 28:19).

The mission of the church becomes clearer as Paul uses both building and biological terms to describe “the building up of the body of Christ.” Individual Christians meet together locally and are to be “built up” by fellow members of the flock. Andrew Lincoln observes, “The notion of building up or edifying the body had been a major criterion in Paul’s evaluation of various ministries (cf. 1 Cor 14:3-5, 12, 26).”⁵⁷ The frequency of this subject is an indication of its importance. It is not God’s will for believers to remain the same as they were before their life in Christ. The building up or edification of the church must be the objective of every member of God’s church.

As each individual is built up in the faith, the church functions as God intended it to function. Missionaries are sent out from the church as gifted leaders affirm their giftedness. Christians will rightly handle God’s Word as it is preached from the pulpit. The church will defend the faith outside of the church with gentleness and respect (1 Pet 3:15). In other words, the spiritual growth of the church equates to the numerical growth of the church. Mature disciples of Jesus commit to making disciples of the nations.

Clinton Arnold interprets the conjunction “until” (μέχρι) in verse 13 to indicate “both a temporal end as well as a goal toward which believers are to strive.”⁵⁸ The church,

⁵⁶ Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 396.

⁵⁷ Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 254.

⁵⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), chap. 9, sec. 4:13a-b, para. 2. Kindle.

Lincoln explains, is “to ensure that there is a progressive movement toward the goal of full appropriation of the one faith and of the one knowledge of Christ.”⁵⁹ The first step toward maturity is unity in the Christian faith. The church is made up of individuals that God has saved at various times and with various experiences in life. God has gifted leaders in his church to bring unique individuals, saved by the grace of Jesus Christ, together in the “one faith” (Eph 4:5). Christian unity implies that spiritual maturity cannot be reached outside of the church. Lincoln observes, “The idea is of the whole Church moving toward the appropriation of all that is contained in its one faith.”⁶⁰

F. F. Bruce notes, “The knowledge of the Son of God” refers to an experiential knowledge.⁶¹ Although an experiential knowledge is not referenced in Paul’s two intercessory prayers (Eph 1:17-19; 3:16-19), Lincoln comments the knowledge expressed is certainly a goal to be reached.⁶² Believers with different experiences in their walk with Christ are able to minister to those who have yet to share the same experiences. As the nations are reached for Christ, the cultural diversity of God’s church grows. Diversity adds unique experiences to the body that further adds to the spiritual growth of the church. Each member of Christ’s church, regardless of one’s cultural background, is able to contribute to the spiritual growth of the church.

Paul has already spoke of the “fullness” of Christ in the first chapter of Ephesians (v. 23). He uses the phrase “fullness of God” in the third chapter (v. 19). Arnold understands the phrase “fullness of Christ” to mean believers are to reflect Christ’s virtues and likeness in their lives.⁶³ As one matures in Christ, one will exemplify Christ-

⁵⁹ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255.

⁶⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255.

⁶¹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 349.

⁶² Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 255.

⁶³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, chap. 9, sec. 4:13c, para. 6.

like characteristics. Members of the local church will grow toward maturity in Christ as they surround themselves by others who follow Christ. The local church is the primary means that a believer grows in Christ-like maturity as the local church is where one finds followers of Christ.

Paul's reference to Christ as the "head" of the whole body further supports the corporate mission of the church. Arnold explains, "Christ is not simply the originator of the church (i.e., the 'source' of the church absolutely). He is actively involved in stimulating and directing the ministry of the church as well as providing the church all that it needs to develop and reach maturity."⁶⁴ Christ knows what the church needs to reach full maturity in him, which is why every believer has been granted a spiritual gift that may be used in the local church to accomplish the mission. Christ calls gifted individuals to pursue cross-cultural missions for the advancement of the gospel and the glory of his name. Those Christ has called will use the local church as the primary equipping and sending agency to complete the Great Commission. The phrase "body of Christ" implies that each member in Christ's church has a role to play in the development and growth of the church.

In verse 16, Arnold notes the phrase "the whole body" as the whole church actively participating in the facilitation of its own growth.⁶⁵ The Christian church must see each individual as gifted by God and as an important member in the community of God. Paul does not consider a single person in Christ to lack a God given gift nor does he permit believers to be spectators in God's church. His clarity on individual giftedness means that everyone has a role to play in the mission of the church. God is raising up gifted men and women to be sent from the church to go where the church does not exist.

⁶⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, chap. 9, sec. 4:15c, para. 2.

⁶⁵ Arnold, *Ephesians*, chap. 9, sec. 4:16a-c, para. 2.

Conclusion

The passages surveyed (Hos 1:10-2:11; 1 Pet 2:4-10; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 5:1-13; Eph 4:11-16) make a strong case from both the Old and New Testament of God's plan for his people. The individualistic society of the western world has produced a faith in God that is private and personal. The Scriptures, however, present a universal and corporate faith. God's people must understand this truth and join a local church. Through the local church, believers will use their God-given gifts and help others to know and grow in Christ. As members of a local body, fellow believers will pursue full maturity in Christ and commit to making disciples. Without the church, spiritual growth is slow, stunted, or non-existent and the Great Commission is greatly hindered. Membership in the local body is not an option for believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the hope of every believer. There is no greater endeavor to help others to know him more, and there is no greater achievement than becoming more like him.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES
IN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

When a church is planted it is imperative a membership program is developed and implemented as soon as possible. A membership course permits the local church to promote unity within the body of Christ. It allows leadership to define the essentials of the faith and be assured that every member affirms sound doctrine and understands the implications of membership. A membership course helps believers discover their spiritual gifts, which permits members to use their gifts for the good of the body and the growth of the church. Furthermore, the development and implementation of a church membership course will serve as a foundation for the equipping and encouraging of potential members to make disciples of the nations.

Paul Borthwick notes that there has been a shift in the worldwide church of Jesus Christ. He comments, “Most of our Christian brothers and sisters live in the Southern Hemisphere and the Eastern Hemisphere. Even though the Western world has dominated Christianity for much of Christian history, Christianity is now primarily a nonwhite, non-Western, nonwealthy religion.”¹ Borthwick’s words resonate with a church such as EICT. An international church must be sensitive to the diversity of its members. The development and implementation of a membership curriculum in a multicultural church must include cultural competencies and interpersonal skills. The inclusion of cultural competencies and interpersonal skills will serve to reduce conflict and misunderstandings that are inevitable in a fallen world.

¹ Paul Borthwick, *Western Christians in Global Mission: What’s the Role of the North American Church?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012), 36.

Unity among Diverse Individuals

Globalization creates the type of diversity in the local church that resembles the hope of heaven. Revelation 7:9-10 states,

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

This is encouraging news for the church, but multicultural churches encounter many challenges. Ethnocentrism, for example, will divide a church. An international church membership course must unite the body of Christ by recognizing diversity as God ordained. Duane Elmer explains, "We should not reject cultural diversity, because it is born of the natural differences that exist in people. We can remain open to the cultural diversity as long as it doesn't violate a clear mandate of Scripture."² Leaders in the church must help the body understand there is much to be gained by the addition of other cultures. Elmer notes that God wants diversity "to be respected and harnessed in such a way that together we strive for the glory of God and unify around the work of his kingdom."³ Where there is no unity, there is no church.

Sherwood Lingenfelter comments, "At the heart of our blindness and ethnocentrism is a false perception of our identities and significance."⁴ Curriculum in a church membership course must be open and honest about mankind's perception of oneself. Most individuals view his or her culture as superior over other cultures. Battling against cultural wars requires a membership course that will challenge potential members to be cultural learners. Edmund Clowney explains, "The ideal of cultural diversity within the church means that we learn from one another and appreciate the rich variety of human

² Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 56.

³ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 83.

⁴ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally: Covenant Relationships for Effective Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 94.

lifestyles. Unity in Christ does not suppress cultural expression.”⁵ Church membership, especially in an international church, must stress the value of cultural expression. Elmer notes, “When we discover the validity of other cultures’ ways (though maybe not all their ways), we not only discover the beauty and diversity of God’s own character, but we discover something about ourselves and are freed to change in ways that better reveal our Creator to others.”⁶ God uses diversity, therefore, to reveal more of himself to his children and for the sanctification of his church.

Potential members must learn practical ways to promote cross-cultural unity.

Elmer provides a list that every believer must understand in a multicultural church:

We are to take the initiative in showing acceptance toward others, making them feel valued and respected. We unconditionally accept others without considering external features, lifestyle, decisions, habits and so forth (Note: acceptance is not approval.). We do not have the option of rejecting any person, though we may, in a culturally appropriate way, address behaviors that the Bible clearly declares as sinful. We are to eliminate our own dehumanizing behaviors such as threats, intimidations, power-plays and other ungodly forms of manipulation. We accept people-period; like Jesus, we must reject labels such as race, generation and gender as defective guides for how to treat another human being. We expect that accepting others in these ways may cost us dearly.⁷

A church membership curriculum must include these essential points to prepare believers from all cultures to strive toward unity and be prepared to put in the work necessary for unity to exist.

Church membership curriculum in an international setting must also include lessons on intercultural competencies. It is impossible for every believer to understand all of the cultural nuances in the world, but it is reasonable to assume one may learn from the cultures that exist within the local body. Evelyn and Richard Hibbert suggest that miscommunication amongst multicultural groups can be minimized by asking good

⁵ Edmund Clowney, *The Church: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 164.

⁶ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 143.

⁷ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 59.

questions.⁸ Membership curriculum must allow potential members to identify one's cultural values and expectations in church relationships. Understanding the complexities of a culture within the body will minimize unwanted division due to misunderstanding. Hibbert and Hibbert stress that learning about other cultures will help believers "become increasingly aware of the variety of ways in which humans order and make sense of their world and relate to one another within it."⁹ Given the transient nature of an international church, teaching intercultural competencies produces global Christians that will return to their country of origin with a greater vision and understanding of God's universal church.

Mark Dever comments, "The church is generated by the right preaching of the Word. The church is distinguished and contained by the right administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper."¹⁰ A unified church holds to the supremacy of the preaching of God's Word because, as Clowney states, "the hearing of God's Word forms and directs the life of the assembly."¹¹ United believers submit to the Word of God and affirm the truths within as the absolute authority for life and godliness. Church membership curriculum must stress the importance of the preaching of God's Word as one of the unifying factors of the church.

Furthermore, church membership curriculum must include an explanation of the importance of baptism and communion. Dever explains, "When churches practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, they obey Christ's teaching and example. In so doing, they portray Christ's death and resurrection, the testimony of every believer's own spiritual birth, as well as the church's collective hope for the final resurrection and reunion

⁸ Evelyn Hibbert and Richard Hibbert, *Leading Multicultural Teams* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2014), chap. 2, sec. "Implications of Cultural Differences for Team Leaders," para. 7. Kindle.

⁹ Hibbert and Hibbert, *Leading Multicultural Teams*, chap. 2, sec. "Implications of Cultural Differences for Team Leaders," para. 8.

¹⁰ Mark Dever, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 21.

¹¹ Clowney, *The Church*, 130.

with the Lord.”¹² Diversity within the church is united by the testimony of God’s grace expressed in baptism and communion. Baptism expresses the new life that one has in Christ. Hence, the grafting into God’s family regardless of one’s cultural differences (Rom 11:17). Communion invites all believers in Christ to the table regardless of cultural background. Most importantly, the ordinances connect every tongue, tribe, people, and nation together as they affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Prayer unifies the church. Clowney states, “Whether in formal or informal gatherings, fervent corporate prayer is the life-breath of Christ’s church.”¹³ A church’s membership curriculum must stress the importance of corporate prayer and explain the importance of prayer for the individual believer. Lingenfelter describes prayer as “the body of Christ humbling itself before God, worshiping God, listening to the Holy Spirit, and submitting in obedience to the will and purpose of God.”¹⁴ If communication mishaps occur within a multicultural church, regardless of cultural preferences or concerns, prayer will refocus every believer toward the will of God and God’s ultimate glory. In addition, believers who pray for the body will increase in their affections for the body. Prayer unites the church by seeking the best for others. Prayer breaks down bitterness and division as it allows individual believers to envision other believers worshipping before the throne of grace. Membership curriculum must include prayer as an essential component toward unity in the body.

Ultimately, every potential member into the local church must commit to loving one another (Jon 13:34-35). Clowney writes, “We serve the one true God, who is also the heavenly Father of his one family (Eph. 3:14). The love that responds to his love will draw

¹² Dever, *The Church*, 28.

¹³ Clowney, *The Church*, 133.

¹⁴ Lingenfelter, *Leading Cross-Culturally*, 40.

us to one another as surely as it draws us to him from who it comes.”¹⁵ Love is not something that can be manufactured in a church membership course, however, practical expressions of love can be included in the curriculum. Love manifests through acts of hospitality, acts of service, and overlooking offences.

Elmer comments, “Hospitality is extending love to those we don’t know and who may be of a different ethnic or cultural history. It is the idea of being gracious to all people, welcoming them into your presence and making them feel valued.”¹⁶ Hospitality among the body of believers must be encouraged for the sake of unity. Since the EICT is situated in Paris, France, practicing hospitality will be noted in the curriculum as one of the most effective ways to reach the French for Christ.

Also, the subject of unity presents opportunities to share needs within the flock. Clowney states, “Those who share the Spirit are of one accord unified in the love of Christ (Phil. 2:1-2). Fellowship in compassion includes fellowship in material blessings: those who share a common life will share daily bread and clothing.”¹⁷ Allowing others to serve the body by indicating the needs of the body will promote church unity.

Given the multicultural setting of an international church, the practical aspects of forgiveness must be identified so that potential members are equipped to express love and promote church unity. Hibbert explains, “There is no single Christian culture, only Christian ways of doing things in many different cultures.”¹⁸ Forgiveness does not look the same in every culture. Potential members need to know how to express forgiveness according to the cultures that exist within the EICT.

¹⁵ Clowney, *The Church*, 79.

¹⁶ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 42.

¹⁷ Clowney, *The Church*, 81.

¹⁸ Hibbert, *Leading Multicultural Teams*, chap. 3, sec. “Unity Means Harmony Not Conformity,” para. 6.

A discussion on the complexities of hospitality, service, and forgiveness according to different cultures would be wise. Christian love is selfless and seeks others needs above one's own needs. If love and the expressions of love are communicated to potential members, then the church will foster unity among its members.

Essential Christian Doctrine and the Affirmation of Biblical Truth

Jonathan Leeman states, "A church best serves its members by being explicit about what it believes."¹⁹ It is imperative that a church membership curriculum include a Statement of Faith (SOF) to clearly communicate to potential members the beliefs of EICT and the biblical gospel. Potential members must affirm the SOF and know the good news of Jesus Christ before being introduced to the church as a member.

An international church receives believers from different countries and with different denominational backgrounds. A SOF must be vague enough to accept members with secondary points of view but narrow in the essentials of the faith. John Koessler explains, "Labeling the doctrines of biblical inerrancy, the Virgin Birth, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, and the bodily resurrection and return of Christ as 'fundamentals' implies that there may be room for a measure of diversity on the other doctrines that do not fall into this category."²⁰ If a potential member does not uphold the inerrancy of Scripture, the sinlessness of Christ, God in three persons, justification by faith, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and Christ's imminent return, then he or she will not be a member of EICT. Speaking of the historic faith of Christianity, Koessler writes, "Our theology cannot be separated from the community of faith to which we belong. Our doctrine is rooted firmly in the divine written revelation of the Old and New

¹⁹ Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love: Reintroducing the Doctrines of Church Membership and Discipline* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 296.

²⁰ John Koessler, *Foundational Faith: Unchangeable Truth for an Ever-Changing World* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 177.

Testaments-God's explanation of Himself to humanity."²¹ The SOF for EICT, therefore, will be vague but will unite believers in the affirmation of orthodox Christianity.

Thabiti Anyabwile notes, "Healthy church members will commit themselves to defending the essential things of the gospel (Phil. 1:27; Jude 3), while avoiding strife and contention over things that are not essential to the gospel."²² A clear, biblical, and precise presentation of the gospel must be included in church membership curriculum. Anyabwile continues, "The greatest need in the world today is the gospel. It is the greatest need of the world because men, women, and children are perishing without a vital knowledge of God through the good news of our Savior and his Son, Jesus."²³ A church membership curriculum will include a presentation of the gospel. For some potential members it will be a refreshing reminder of the person, word, and work of Jesus Christ. It is possible that others will hear the biblical gospel for the first time. Potential members must know the gospel and be able to communicate the gospel to others after completing a church membership course at EICT. Potential members will be encouraged to hold fast to the gospel and to unite in the gospel above petty disputes (1 Cor 15:1-2; Phil 4:1-3).

Another important aspect of a SOF is the opportunity for church leadership to educate and inform potential members who have yet to fully grasp essential Christian doctrine. Church membership curriculum should include an explanation of basic church doctrine and allow questions to be presented for those who have yet to receive such teaching. An SOF must not be complex and confusing, but it must be clear for those new to the faith. It also must be considerate of those with no educational background or believers who speak English as a second language.

²¹ Koessler, *Foundational Faith*, 16.

²² Thabiti Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 34-35.

²³ Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?*, 39.

Biblical heresy is a constant threat to Christ's church. An SOF will not prevent the inclusion of heretical doctrine but it will serve to protect the flock. Gregg Allison agrees when he refers to a corporate confession of faith or SOF to serve as a barrier "against a fall into heresy, a slide that is tragically facilitated by the loss of historic consciousness in many churches and denominations."²⁴ Church leaders must be committed to sound doctrine and an SOF will ensure that the church continues to affirm the historic faith.

Every believer who expresses a desire to join the church as a member must be required to sign the church's SOF. A signature will serve as an affirmation of essential Christian doctrine and will convey the understanding that the church stands for truth. John Hannah observes that truth is dissipating in the evangelical church. As truth subsides, Hannah notes, churches appear more like "social, do-good agencies whose purpose has to do with helping people to more fully enjoy this life while neglecting the implications of eternity."²⁵ Requiring a signature communicates that eternal matters are non-negotiable as a member of Christ's church and that truth matters in this relativistic world.

Leeman comments, "If a statement of faith articulates what a church believes, a church covenant articulates how it agrees to live together."²⁶ A church covenant must be introduced and signed in a church membership course in addition to an SOF. The expectations of a church member who affirms essential doctrine is particularly important in a multicultural setting. Although differences in a multicultural church are numerous, a church covenant will communicate the expectations of every member.

²⁴ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 138.

²⁵ John Hannah, *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001), 18.

²⁶ Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love*, 299.

Allison confirms that a church covenant “is built into the fabric of the New Testament,” Citing Ephesians 4:25-32, Allison concludes that covenantal relationships in the church are characterized by speaking truth to one another, refraining from sinful rage, promoting honesty, speaking to others with grace for the purpose of edification, practicing kindness, and following the covenantal obligations found in Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Colossians 3:18-4:1, Titus 2:1-10, and 1 Peter 2:13-3:7.²⁷ Essentially, affirming a church covenant identifies the implications of membership into the body of Christ and defines the expectations of members with leaders within the church.

The requirements to affirm a SOF and a church covenant help leaders identify those who follow Jesus and who have been transformed by the power of the gospel. Benjamin Merkle states, “Membership should be limited to those who profess faith in Christ, have been baptized, and live a life that is consistent with their profession.”²⁸ One can never be sure if a potential believer understands the biblical gospel and its implications. A church membership course permits the local church to identify true members of the universal church and spur them on toward gospel ministry.

Furthermore, those who are soundly saved will submit to the leaders in the local church. Those who were once hostile toward the things of God have now been reconciled with God (Col 1:21). Merkle explains that Christians give respect and recognition to those God has gifted to lead. Merkle explains that new members “must place themselves under the authority and accountability of those who will shepherd them.”²⁹ This task is given to the leaders of the church and designed by God (Heb 13:17).

²⁷ Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, 124.

²⁸ Benjamin Merkle, “The Biblical Basis for Church Membership,” in *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline*, ed. John Hammett and Benjamin Merkle (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2012), sec. “Conclusion,” para. 2, Kindle.

²⁹ Merkle, “The Biblical Basis for Church Membership,” sec. “From the Sheep’s Perspective,” para. 4.

If the responsibilities of members are not clearly defined, then the case for biblical church discipline will be compromised. Church discipline must be a topic of discussion in a church membership course as it is instituted for the good of the church. Leeman describes church discipline as “the church’s response to the unholy within itself.”³⁰ The church is called to be holy (1 Pet 1:14-16). Leaders within the church are to shepherd the flock and ensure that the flock is growing in Christ. A member in willful sin must be removed for the sanctity of the body. Defining church discipline in church membership curriculum will greatly enhance a potential member’s understanding of its necessity. Communicating the importance of church discipline will lay the foundation for a healthy church.

Spiritual Gifts and the Responsibility of Gifted Individuals

Thom Rainer rightly states, “With church membership, everyone has a role or function. That is why some are hands, feet, ears, or eyes. We are all different, but we are necessary parts of the whole.”³¹ Church membership curriculum must stress the importance of corporate responsibilities, spiritual gifts, and the overall mission of the universal church.

A membership course will include an introduction of the gifted men God has chosen to lead EICT. The leaders will explain how leadership is structured within the church and detail their roles and responsibilities as leaders. At EICT, leadership consists of a plurality of elders. If the pastor of EICT is not leading one of the lessons, then he will say a brief word about his philosophy of ministry and describe the implications of congregationalism. For example, as Leeman explains, “In a congregational polity, the church will be asked to vote (in some contexts) or come to a consensus (in other contexts) on the final act of excommunication, an activity that appears to have a scriptural

³⁰ Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God’s Love*, 220.

³¹ Thom S. Rainer, *I am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude That Makes the Difference* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2013), 12.

precedent.”³² An explanation of how the church is organized will give potential members a better idea of his or her role in an elder-led congregational church.

The duties of an elder must be included in the explanation of church leadership and the symbiotic relationship between leaders and the congregation. Merkle summarizes the roles of an elder to be a leader, a shepherd, a teacher, and an equipper.³³ It is important that these roles are clearly communicated as it stresses the importance of functioning as a biblical church. Merkle notes, “Even as the church demonstrates godly, submissive ‘fellowship,’ it is the congregation’s responsibility to ensure that the elders’ teaching, modeling, and ministry leadership are plausibility biblical.”³⁴

Membership curriculum must also describe the role of deacons. Dever notes that diaconal duties may include the reading of Scripture or singing in church, receiving the offerings and keeping records of those who gave, distributing the offerings to those who lead or are in need, distributing communion, leading prayers during gathering, and enforcing who may partake in communion.³⁵ For those who are qualified, potential members will be encouraged to serve as deacons (1 Tim 3:8; Titus 1:7).

There are two great challenges when addressing spiritual gifts in a multicultural church. First, potential members may not be aware of their spiritual giftedness. Second, these gifts may not translate well between different cultures. It is imperative that potential members grow in their understanding of spiritual gifts and that the expressions of these gifts are explained.

³² Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 74.

³³ Benjamin Merkle, “The Office of Deacon,” in *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*, ed. Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 270.

³⁴ Merkle, “The Office of Deacon,” 298.

³⁵ Mark Dever, “Elders and Deacons in History,” in Dever and Leeman, *Baptist Foundations*, 229.

Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely define spiritual gifts as “abilities that God has granted to Christians for the edification of others in the body and the evangelization of those outside of the body.”³⁶ Potential members must be able to affirm this definition so that the church may function as a biblical church. A membership course should challenge potential members in their understanding of their own personal abilities and priorities in the church. Discussing spiritual giftedness allows leaders to stress the importance of service and the dangers of church spectatorship. It will also allow leaders to encourage potential members to identify their spiritual gifts.

Every potential member must serve the church according to the needs of the church. Leadership at EICT desire every potential member to serve where they are gifted, but this is not always possible. A church membership curriculum must include the importance of serving where one is not necessarily gifted. One that is gifted in administration, for example, is still called to evangelize (1 Pet 3:15-16). Spiritual gifts do not restrict one’s abilities or responsibilities in the church.

Those who know their gifts are eager to use them. Leaders may also use the membership course to identify potential members who know their spiritual gifts. Once a potential member’s spiritual giftedness is identified, leaders can place these individuals in areas within the church where they can practice their gifts. Also, leadership may create new opportunities at EICT as the Lord provides gifted men and women for the edification of the body.

Membership curriculum must include the importance of using spiritual gifts within the church. When the church is doing what it was purposed to do, growth is inevitable. Mack and Swavely explain that the church “will grow qualitatively in the effectiveness of its ministries, and in most cases it will also grow quantitatively by adding

³⁶ Wayne Mack and Dave Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House: A Member’s Guide to the Local Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2006), 146.

people who are being saved through hearing the Gospel or being served in some way by the body.”³⁷

Every church member is gifted, but few know how to identify spiritual gifts. Mack and Swavely include six helpful steps in identify one’s giftedness that should be included in the implementation of membership curriculum: study, prayer, humility, evaluation, confirmation, and service.³⁸ Membership curriculum must expound on these points so that every potential member can discover how God has gifted them. Mack and Swavely note that prayer should be focused on wisdom; humility is involved as one must be open to God’s will; self-evaluation is helpful as one may examine prior service in the church; confirmation is helpful as outside relationships are often more neutral and objective; and simply serving allows one to find where he or she might thrive in service to the local church.³⁹ The development of membership curriculum will also include a brief study of texts in the Scriptures linked to spiritual giftedness (Eph 4; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12; 1 Pet 4:10-11).

Given the diversity of an international church, the gifts practiced toward one another may not translate as one would expect. A lesson of interpersonal skills must be included to avoid unnecessary conflict and to ensure that spiritual gifts are communicated effectively. Americans who are gifted to lead, for example, have a strong desire to lead believers toward spiritual maturity. As a Westerner, the language chosen when in leadership may create conflict. Duane Elmer explains, “Directness in language implies that one can speak to a problem without offending the person. Western culture tends to separate the person from the problem, the person from the action or the person from the

³⁷ Mack and Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House*, 160.

³⁸ Mack and Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House*, 160-62.

³⁹ Mack and Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House*, 160-62.

idea.”⁴⁰ Although the intentions of a Western leader is to serve the church well, not all cultures respond well to direct communication. Duane Elmer notes, “Most people in the world do not place a high value on direct, face-to-face confrontation to solve a conflict. Such directness is considered crude, harsh, uncultured and certainly disrespectful if not cruel.”⁴¹ A solution for both potential leaders and members who will serve alongside different cultures is to encourage the usage of a mediator. Elmer explains a mediator an individuals used to avoid a face-to-face confrontation, “thereby minimizing the possibility of loss of face, shame, or dishonor for both parties.”⁴² A case study will be presented in the implementation of the curriculum to stress the importance of good communication and the necessity of a mediator.

Another component of conflict in a multicultural church is one’s view of community. Westerners are more individualistic and yet the Two-Thirds World considers the good of the community over individual needs. Elmer comments, “Westerners, simply by being themselves, create conflict because they operate from a different value base.”⁴³ Simply communicating these truths in a church membership course will help potential members be aware of the diversity that surrounds them.

Equipping and Encouraging the Making of Disciples

The membership course is an opportunity to encourage potential members to be disciples for Jesus. The curriculum must also equip potential members to make disciples. For some in attendance, a discussion on discipleship may be a helpful review.

⁴⁰ Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 49.

⁴¹ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict*, 50.

⁴² Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict*, 67.

⁴³ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict*, 62.

For others, challenging one to grow as a disciple and teaching them to reach their community will be an invaluable resource in their walk with Christ.

Challenging one to grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ will require the teaching of spiritual disciplines. Donald Whitney explains, “Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.”⁴⁴ A church membership course allows leadership to provide helpful resources to allow each potential member to grow in the faith.

The duration of a membership course must be considered, however, a few essential disciplines must be included in a new member course curriculum. The daily reading of the Scriptures will be strongly encouraged. Bibles should be provided for those who do not own an English translation. Reading plans must be distributed to give potential members a helpful start in this endeavor.

The importance of prayer is another discipline that will be included in membership curriculum. A brief description of prayer and a lesson on how one may pray using the Psalms will aid potential members in their prayer life. Disciples of Jesus must know how to pray, and a membership course will ensure members of EICT are devoted to prayer.

Serving others will be highlighted as a spiritual discipline. Whitney explains, “The gospel of Jesus Christ transforms sinners against God into servants of God.”⁴⁵ Every potential member will be encouraged to serve others joyfully in the Lord. The curriculum will provide practical ways that one may serve his or her neighbor in the community.

⁴⁴ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines within the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 8.

⁴⁵ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 157.

Stewardship is another discipline that must be addressed that will include the usage of time, energy, and resources. Many potential members arrive in Paris to start a new job or begin a new school year. Their lives are often full of stress. The urban environment makes it hard to adjust for some families. Encouraging biblical stewardship gives potential members helpful ways to be godly stewards in a godless city.

The spiritual discipline of fasting must be included in a church membership course. Whitney suggests that a biblical fast is done “according to biblical teaching and with purposes that are God-centered.”⁴⁶ The goal is for each member to grow. Teaching the importance of fasting will ensure that every potential member pursues godliness.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ also involves participation in the life of the church. The EICT meets weekly for prayer and Bible study. A church membership course must stress the importance of attending these meetings as well as planned social events. Paul David Tripp comments that members of the church “tend to have permanently casual relationships that never grow into real intimacy. There are things we know about each other, but they fool us into thinking that we know the human beings who live within the borders of those details.”⁴⁷ Promoting involvement in regular church activities allows believers to get to know one another outside of the confines of a church building, where true ministry begins. Potential members must understand the importance of ministering to fellow disciples of Jesus. Tripp explains, “Entering a person’s world enables us to apply the truths of the gospel in a way that is situation- and person-specific.”⁴⁸

Although few families attend EICT, the church membership curriculum must include an understanding of the importance of family ministry. Jay Strother states, “Every practice at every level of ministry is reworked completely to champion the place of

⁴⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 192.

⁴⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands: People in Need of Change Helping Others in Need of Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 163.

⁴⁸ Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer’s Hands*, 168.

parents as primary disciple-makers in children’s lives”⁴⁹ Many families at EICT have been transferred by their work for a specific amount of time. Families must find housing, enroll in new schools, and reestablish life in a foreign country. A church membership curriculum must include resources for parents adjusting to a new life. Leaders must use this time to communicate that the church is available to ease the transition of culture shock. Providing parents with a clear philosophy of family ministry can provide peace of mind for parents concerned about the effects of a new culture on their children. Furthermore, establishing a family-equipping model early in the church will ensure that this philosophy is integrated into the DNA of this new church plant. Strother explains that the goal of a family equipping model of family ministry is “to create a biblically rooted culture.”⁵⁰ Teaching new members about family-equipping is an essential topic for church membership.

The safety of children while in the care of EICT is another subject that must be implemented in church membership curriculum. A child safety policy will be introduced to provide peace of mind for parents. This policy will also include guidelines for working with youth at EICT. Potential members will be required to sign the guidelines of the safety policy. Potential youth workers will be required to provide background information to further ensure the safety of the children.

God brings individuals and families to Paris for various reasons, but the mission of a disciple never changes. Believers are called to make disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19). How to evangelize in post-modern Europe is an essential element in new member course curriculum.

⁴⁹ Jay Strother, “Making the Transition to Family-Equipping Ministry,” in *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective*, ed. Randy Stinson and Timothy Paul Jones (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 256.

⁵⁰ Strother, “Making the Transition,” 264.

The first element in equipping potential members to reach Europe is to highlight what God is already doing in the community. Presenting opportunities for potential members to partner with current evangelistic works is a simple transition for those new to the city. Going alongside others with experience in reaching Europeans is an effective way to grow in evangelistic further. It is also a time that believers can observe cultural differences and establish relationships.

Stressing the importance of relationship building is important in France. Ed Stetzer comments, “You must show that you have concern for those you are seeking to reach and that you care enough to remember them and keep in contact with them.”⁵¹ Every culture has nuances that one must consider in outreach endeavors. Providing helpful advice on French culture is an element that will be included in the curriculum as it will save potential members from a potential “faux pas.”

Although there are many evangelistic approaches in the realm of Christianity, it is not a good idea to endorse one particular method in reaching post-modern Europe. The importance of listening must be encouraged in church membership curriculum. The French love to talk. Curriculum must be implemented that will stress the importance of listening. Everyone, including post-modern Europeans, have a salvation story. Teaching potential members to listen for one’s salvation story will allow them to respond in a way that will confront and correct one’s worldview. Providing real-life examples of encounters in France will allow members to identify one’s view on creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of all things. Once they are able to identify a Frenchman’s salvation story, the curriculum will be used to educate members on the true metanarrative of Scripture.

Making disciples also includes the sending and supporting of cross-cultural missions. Church membership curriculum must include the role of the church in going to

⁵¹ Ed Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Post-Modern Age* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 188.

the nations, sending missionaries, praying for cross-cultural missionaries, and welcoming the nations as they visit EICT.

Many individuals and families fit the characteristics of a cross-cultural missionary. During their time at EICT, they will experience many similarities to a career missionary. Church membership curriculum should include the necessity of going to the nations and encouraging obedience to the Great Commission.

Since many of the individuals and families may soon return to their country of origin, the curriculum will stress the importance of sending individuals and families off as missionaries from EICT. Incorporating “send-offs” into the curriculum is a way to communicate that potential members are a part of the universal family of God and are appreciated by EICT. Church membership curriculum will also identify the need to financially support global missions. Missionaries are sent as the church provides the training and the need financial resources.

John Piper comments, “Prayer is the power that wields the weapon of the Word, and the Word is the weapon by which the nations will be brought to faith and obedience.”⁵² Praying for those in cross-cultural missions that preach the Word is another subject that will be included in church member curriculum as it will keep the church’s mind on the global mission of God. Identifying missionaries in France and abroad will be included so that potential members will have opportunities to engage in prayer for the expansion of the church. Potential member will also be directed to websites that highlight the need for global missions.

Finally, the French appreciate the arts and culture. The EICT is aware of this fact and organizes concerts and plays throughout the year. Church membership curriculum will provide the dates of these events and will provide invitations to hand out to the surrounding community. Because few Europeans will walk through the doors of a church,

⁵² John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 2nd rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 63.

these events are organized in people's homes. The curriculum will indicate the importance of opening up one's home for outreach events and utilizing the artists the church procures for outreach purposes.

Conclusion

A church membership course is a necessary element of the local church. The curriculum in a church membership course must provide the essentials needed to maintain unity in the church, instruct others in the foundations of the faith, encourage and identify spiritual gifts, and equip and encourage disciples. In addition to these topics, an international church invites a unique cultural dynamic often overlooked in mono-cultural churches. An international church must stress intercultural competencies and interpersonal skills. There are few church options for international English-speaking believers in Paris. EICT is one of the few places one can go to hear the Word of God preached that affirms orthodox Christianity. Instructing potential members on intercultural competencies and interpersonal skills will prepare believers from all walks of life to communicate well and to recognize and embrace cultural differences. When individual believers embrace the diversity given to the church by God, the result will be a unified church. There is no greater witness for Christ than a diverse, multicultural, God-gifted church unified in the essentials of the faith.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The project to develop and implement a church membership course at Emmanuel International Church of Ternes (EICT) began in September 2019. It was completed in February 2020. Twenty-three weeks was dedicated to the completion of this project.

The EICT and EICRM pastors and pastoral intern were surveyed during weeks 1-3. An email was sent to the pastoral panel explaining the goals of this project. The Essentials in International Church Membership Inventory (EICMI) was attached to the email with a request to complete the survey.¹ All of the results were received and evaluated on week 3. The evaluation of the results permitted me to begin the development of the curriculum.

During weeks 4-10, the first draft of the church membership curriculum was created. The topics in the EICMI with the highest means were incorporated into the curriculum. Topics with the lowest means were not considered in the development of the church membership curriculum.

During the creation of the curriculum, a four-week sermon series on church membership was prepared and preached by a member of the pastoral panel and me. The first two sermons were preached by a member of the pastoral panel. I preached the final two Sundays. Weeks 6-10, therefore, were devoted to preaching a sermon series on church membership at EICT.

¹ See appendix 1.

Weeks 11-13 were set aside for the pastoral staff to evaluate the six lessons. An email was sent to the pastoral panel with an attachment containing the six lessons. The Components of Membership Course Evaluation (CMCE) was also attached to the email.² The results of the CMCE were received and assessed during week 13.

Based on the results of the CMCE, the church membership course curriculum needed to be revised. Weeks 14-18 were dedicated to curriculum revisions. The pastoral panel comments were used to rewrite portions of the curriculum and add curriculum the pastoral panel deemed necessary.

Weeks 19-20 were dedicated to reassessment of the curriculum. An email was sent to the pastoral panel including the revised the curriculum. I requested that the pastoral panel complete the CMCE after reviewing the curriculum. The results of the pastoral panel were received and reviewed during week 20.

During the curriculum revisions, weeks 19-23 were spent inviting regular attenders to sign up for the membership course. Invitations to sign-up for the course were announced at the end of each Sunday service. Advertisements for the course were presented on the EICT private Facebook group and by email.

Those who signed up for the course were emailed a Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey (BMES) to complete and return during week 23.³ Those who did not sign up for the course or complete the BMES during the allotted time were given a BMES the day of implementation. The BMES was completed and returned, therefore, at the beginning of the church membership course. Once the course was implemented, the BMES was redistributed as a post-survey.

² See appendix 2.

³ See appendix 3.

Essentials in Church Membership Inventory

The ECMI was distributed and completed by the pastor of EICT, the pastor of EICRM, and the pastoral intern. The ECMI consisted of 30 questions to assess the convictions of the pastoral panel on essential content and practical matters involving a church membership course. The responses of the pastoral panel were gathered using a six-point Likert scale.

Inventory Analysis

Results from the ECMI revealed the convictions of the pastoral panel.⁴ Three questions on the ECMI shared the highest mean of 5.6. When asked if the expectations of a church member must be included in church membership curriculum, two of the three members of the pastoral panel strongly agreed. The second question receiving the highest mean on the ECMI related to what happens after the membership course. The EICT and EICRM pastors agreed that a one-on-one meeting with a potential member must take place before a participant is welcomed as a member of the church. The third question receiving the highest mean related to the frequency of the course. The EICT and EICRM pastors believed it was important to offer a membership course a minimum of twice a year.

The lowest average mean on the ECMI related to spiritual gifts and the gospel. When asked if it was important to include a spiritual gift inventory in the church membership curriculum, the mean was a 2.3. An additional question related to spiritual gifts also scored low on the ECMI. When asked if it was necessary to identify spiritual gifts, the mean provided by the pastoral panel was 3.3. When the pastoral panel was asked if it was necessary for potential church members to receive an explanation of the gospel, the pastoral panel somewhat disagreed with a mean score of 2.8. An additional question related to the gospel also received a low mean score. When asked if it was important to teach how to evangelize in Europe, the pastoral panel somewhat disagreed

⁴ See appendix 4.

with a mean of 3. The pastoral panel all agreed with a mean of 5 that potential members must be equipped to articulate the gospel.

Thirty-six percent of the evaluation questions scored a mean of 5 or greater on the ECMI. A mean of 5 infers that the pastoral panel was in general agreement with the question. Practical issues such as offering a membership course in the fall and providing childcare received a mean of 5.3. Ecclesiastical issues such as teaching essential Christian doctrine and affirming a statement of faith also received a mean of 5 or greater. When the pastoral panel was asked if the Great Commission is an important topic in a church membership class, the mean was 5. The final mean score over 5 was related to the responsibilities of leaders. The pastoral panel believed it was essential that the course participants understood the role of the leaders in the church.

Goal 1 of this project was a success as the ECMI assessed the convictions of the pastoral panel on essential content and practical matters that must be considered in membership curriculum for an international church. The preferences of the pastoral panel were identified. The results gathered from the ECMI permitted the project to move forward in the development stage.

Membership Curriculum

Chapter 3 highlighted the essential topics in a church membership course in an international setting. The ECMI revealed the preferences of the pastoral panel. After an analysis of the ECMI and consideration of the topics discussed in chapter 3, a curriculum was created for a church membership course.⁵ The curriculum was divided into six lessons. The six lessons were designed to be taught in an afternoon with a duration no longer than three hours.

⁵ See appendix 5.

Lesson 1

Lesson 1 was created to welcome those in attendance, distribute the handouts needed during the course, and provide an overview of the schedule. An explanation of what the children would be doing during the course was explained as well. Lesson 1 served as an ice breaker for those uncomfortable spending a Saturday afternoon in a church building. This lesson also provided time for questions and answers for participants with remarks or concerns. For those who had not completed the BMES, time was allotted to complete it.

Lesson 2

The objective of lesson 2 was for potential members to hear the gospel and understand its implications in a multicultural context. Beginning with a gospel presentation permitted participants in the membership course who are mature Christians to affirm what they already know to be true. For participants new to the faith, a gospel presentation served to strengthen their understanding of the gospel. After the gospel was presented, the curriculum was designed to encourage unity in the gospel. Cultural differences were addressed but the major focus was welcoming one another in Christ Jesus (Rom 15:5-7). The curriculum in the first lesson continued by addressing the implications of the gospel. The implications included showing hospitality, praying for fellow believers, biblical fellowship in a cross-cultural setting, and forgiveness. The lesson concluded with a presentation by a member of the pastoral panel explaining the church-planting and disciple-making culture desired at EICT. He also included a brief explanation of the history and relationship with EICRM.

Lesson 3

The purpose of lesson 3 was for potential members to understand the vision of EICT and connect the vision of EICT with church ordinances, worship, character, spiritual sanctification, gospel partnerships, corporate gatherings, and church discipline. The curriculum began by sharing the vision of EICT. An explanation of the church's

understanding of baptism and communion was explained using a handout. Biblical worship was defined, which permitted a discussion on Sunday worship and worship as a way of life. Lesson 3 also included an explanation on how to pray through the Psalms. Praying through the Psalms was presented as a way to grow in the faith. Biblical stewardship was identified as a by-product of Christian maturity. Essential Christian doctrine was linked to the EICT vision as well. Scriptural references were included on a handout to discuss the virgin birth, the Trinity, the sinlessness of Christ, justification by faith, and biblical inerrancy. Members were then directed to a handout addressing the EICT Statement of Faith. It was communicated to the participants that all members must affirm the EICT Statement of Faith to become members. The responsibilities of the members section concluded with the church's stance on church discipline.

After a short question and answer session, the curriculum provided an explanation of the gospel partnerships associated with EICT. The church is affiliated with the International Baptist Convention and partners with French associations for accountability and shared resources. Members received a handout indicating when and where the church meets for fellowship and prayer throughout the week. The conclusion of lesson 3 involved the church's desire to reach France with the gospel. Many of the outreach opportunities currently in progress were identified. Potential members were encouraged to participate in outreach events.

Lesson 4

In lesson 4 potential members were taught the leadership structure of EICT, associate membership, the meaning and purpose of a church covenant, and the necessity of biblical stewardship. A member of the pastoral panel began the session defining what it means to be an elder-led, congregationally-ruled church. Afterwards, he covered the distinctives of being Protestant, Evangelical, and Baptist. He provided a definition of each of these terms and concluded with an explanation of the primary, secondary, and tertiary doctrines of Scripture.

Because potential members share different convictions in nonessential doctrine, a member of the pastoral panel explained the associate member process. An associate member might not agree in doctrines such as full-immersion baptism, but the importance of unity in the non-essential doctrines of the faith was stressed. After non-essential doctrines were addressed, a discussion on covenant relationships was highlighted as a responsibility of church membership. Associate members do not have to affirm non-essential doctrine but must affirm the church covenant to continue in the membership process. The church covenant included a statement of the church's covenant with the member.

The curriculum in lesson 4 concluded with an explanation of gospel generosity. It was stressed that members of EIC may have vastly different amounts of resources at their disposal. All members, however, are expected to contribute gladly and generously toward the needs of the EICT family. This expectation is both for the advancement of gospel ministry in Paris and for the members' own personal spiritual growth.

Lesson 5

The curriculum in lesson 5 communicated the importance of family worship and the necessity of a child protection plan. Potential members must understand key components of the policy as a requirement of membership. The child safety policy was introduced as a way to reach children, but with care and caution. Potential members were encouraged to sign the safety policy to be a member and to work with children at EICT.

Lesson 6

Lesson 6 provided a concentrated time of questions and answers, the next steps toward membership at EICT, and time to complete the BMES. Members of the pastoral panel made themselves available to answer questions about the previous lessons. Those interested in membership made an appointment for a membership interview with an EICT pastor to complete the membership process. The lesson concluded by the administration

and completion of the post-assessment to determine the success of the church membership course.

Components of Membership Results

Before teaching the curriculum, the CMCE was administered to the pastoral panel of EICT and EICRM.⁶ The panel assessed the curriculum using a rubric to evaluate biblical faithfulness, methodology, and scope. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded sufficiency. The components of the membership rubric indicators did not meet or exceed the sufficiency level on the first attempt. The panel provided helpful feedback indicating the membership curriculum must be revised.⁷

Using the feedback provided by the pastor panel, the curriculum was revised for reassessment. The content of the lessons was scaled back for the sake of time. The church building was only available for three hours. Terminology deemed too difficult for non-native English speakers was changed to permit efficient communication. The vision of EIC churches was included and highlighted as a key component of instruction. Topics such as intercultural competencies were considered unnecessary and removed from instruction. The CMCE revealed that teaching styles and methods must be included to avoid a long monologue with little class participation. The curriculum revisions included a detailed explanation of notes highlighting the styles and methods of teaching. Also, an emphasis on child safety was included as a part of instruction.

The revised church membership curriculum was submitted to the pastoral panel for evaluation. The CMCE was again used as the survey instrument. The revised version exceeded the sufficiency level for implementation based on the pastoral panel's responses

⁶ The pastoral panel consist of Parker Windle, lead pastor of Emmanuel International Church of Rueil Malmaison; K. J. Pugh, church planting pastor of Emmanuel International Church of Ternes; and Paul Helms, pastoral intern of Emmanuel International Church of Ternes.

⁷ See appendix 6.

to the rubric indicators.⁸ Once the lessons were completed, and the 90 percent benchmark was met by the pastoral panel, this goal was considered a success.

Sermon Series

While the curriculum was being developed and evaluated, four sermons were prepared for the congregation at EICT to pursue church membership.⁹ The first two sermons were preached by a member of the pastoral panel. I preached the final two sermons. The sermon series built a foundational understanding of church membership. The purpose of the sermon series was to encourage participants to consider becoming members of the local body, specifically EICT. The member of the pastoral panel created messages based on his own convictions regarding church membership. The message I preached focused on the insights captured from chapters 2 and 3 of this project.

Sermon 1

Sermon 1 was titled “Covenant Relationships.” The focus of this message was dedicated to the covenant relationship believers have with Jesus Christ. The church is a family, a bride, who enters into a covenant with Christ, and as a consequence, with one another who are in Christ. It was argued in this message that the covenant relationship with Christ is a call into a covenant relationship with the church. Using illustrations, such as the covenant of marriage, it was stressed that the church is not a consumer relationship. Rather, pursuing a covenant relationship with the church is part of God’s means to grow one’s covenant relationship with Jesus.

Sermon 2

“Growing Up Together” was the title of sermon 2. This message was designed to argue why church membership is essential to the Christian life. To support this

⁸ See appendix 7.

⁹ See appendix 8.

argument, spiritual gifts were noted as gifts to the church by Christ Jesus. No member of Christ's church possesses all of the spiritual gifts. Rather, individual spiritual gifts are given to believers by God for the building up of the church. To challenge the flock to pursue church membership, it was stressed that membership into a local body allows one to utilize their God-given gifts. It was also noted, because believers do not possess all of the spiritual gifts, that one needs the local church to grow to full maturity in Christ.

Sermon 3

The third sermon in the church membership sermon series was titled, "The Gracious God." The key theme in this message was that the visible church worshipping in community reveals to the world the powerful impact the gospel has on human lives. To stress the importance of pursuing membership, the message focused on wayward Israel and the gracious God of Israel who chose to restore his people for the glory of his name. It was argued that the church is filled with sinners from every tongue, tribes, peoples, and nations. When the redeemed unite as the local body of Christ, therefore, it is a witness of the saving work of Jesus Christ to the community.

Sermon 4

"A Worshipping Church" was the title of the fourth and final sermon in the church membership series. This message argued that the Old Testament temple has been replaced by the Spirit-indwelled church. God is building up the universal church and, in his church, he is raising up a priesthood. Church membership was stressed as the joining of hands with the local priesthood of believers. Believers who have covenanted together to rid themselves of sin, grow in the knowledge of God, proclaim his glorious gospel, pursue a spirit-filled life, and advance the gospel to the nations.

Sermon Series Analysis

EICT averages thirty regular attenders on a Sunday morning. The size of this church plant and the transient nature of an international church meant that the

participation goal had to be low enough to ensure the implementation of the course, but high enough to consider the course a worthwhile endeavor. The sermon series, therefore, was considered successfully met if at least ten individuals volunteered to participate in the church membership course. This goal was considered a success after 15 regular attenders agreed to participate in the membership course at the conclusion of the sermon series.

Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum was taught on a Saturday afternoon from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Childcare was provided, and a break with coffee and snacks was allotted in the schedule. The Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey (BMES) was distributed by email to participants two weeks prior to the membership course. Eleven of the fifteen participants returned a completed survey before the implementation of the course. Before the class began, the BMES was administered to the four participants who had not returned a completed survey. The BMES determined the participants' knowledge of the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and next steps toward church membership at Emmanuel International Church of Ternes.¹⁰ These topics were chosen due to the response of the pastoral panel on the Components of Membership survey.¹¹ After the completion of the course, the BMES was re-administered to assess the effectiveness of the course.

Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey

The BMES contained thirty questions. Three of the thirty questions specifically addressed the purpose of a membership course, six questions addressed the power of the gospel, nine questions addressed the vision of the church, four questions focused on the responsibilities of leaders and members, and four questions focused on the church's child

¹⁰ See appendix 3.

¹¹ See appendix 6.

safety policy. The final three questions addressed next steps for those who desired to be members. Responses were determined by a six-point Likert scale. The numerical value of the questions was added to obtain a score. The total score for each topic was then analyzed.

A descriptive analysis of the BMES revealed a high standard deviation in all six topics. The participants held various degrees of knowledge in relation to the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps toward church membership. Table 1 displays the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of each of the six topics addressed in the BMES administered before the implementation stage of the church membership course.

Table 1. Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey pre-assessment results

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Purpose of a membership course	4.53	5	5	1.38
Power of the gospel	5.16	6	6	1.36
Vision of the church	5.18	5	6	1.05
Responsibilities of leaders and members	4.6	5	5	1.27
Child safety	4.78	5	6	1.32
Next steps	3.98	4	5	1.18

The BMES administered two weeks prior to the implementation of the curriculum revealed the participants did not understand the next steps toward membership at the conclusion of the course. Also, participants shared a low understanding of the purpose of a church membership course. The high standard deviation in all six topics in the Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey pre-assessment results indicated that participants shared various degrees of understanding in the six topic areas. During the implementation of the curriculum, therefore, all subjects had to be thoroughly addressed to bring every participant to a similar degree of knowledge over the six topic areas.

Additional time was allocated to the topics with the lowest mean score during implementation, but the goal was to see an increase in knowledge in all six subject areas. Those with a weak understanding of the topic areas needed to be unified with those who already shared a strong understanding of the topics.

As a conclusion to the membership course, the BMES was administered again as a post-assessment. The goal was met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-assessment scores: $t_{(14)} = -9.739, p < .0001$. The BMES post-assessment results revealed the overall mean of each topic had significantly increased. The most significant change in the mean occurred regarding the expectations of potential members after the membership course was completed. The mean also increased on the topic of leadership and the responsibilities of members. The low standard deviation revealed that participants were in closer agreement in the six topic areas than before the class commenced. The topic addressing the power of the gospel revealed the least amount of change—the mean had increased, the standard deviation was lower, but the change was not as profound as the other subject areas. Table 2 reveals the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation of the BMES administered at the completion of the church membership course.

Table 2. Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey post-assessment results

	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Purpose of a membership course	5.58	6	6	0.56
Power of the gospel	5.6	6	6	1.13
Vision of the church	5.62	6	6	0.84
Responsibilities of leaders and members	5.45	6	6	0.89
Child safety	5.72	6	6	0.94
Next steps	5.33	5.5	6	0.73

Conclusion

The development and implementation of a membership course was needed at EICT. Many instruments were used to ensure the project would move forward efficiently and with success. The sermon series enlightened the congregation of EICT and could be attributed to the encouraging number of participants in the church membership course.

The ECMI successfully ascertained the topics the pastoral panel desired in a church membership course curriculum. The mean determined the level of importance. A subject with a high mean became an essential element in development of the curriculum.

The CMCE was helpful in the creation of the curriculum's content. Although the original version of the curriculum required revision, the end product was six lessons the leadership unanimously embraced and were eager to implement in a church membership course. A membership curriculum that is embraced by leadership is likely to be reused for future membership courses.

The sermon series successfully created an interest in the church membership course. The enrollment of 15 participants surpassed the expectations surmised from such a small and transient church. The total number of participants was an encouragement and evidence of the conviction participants had in regard to church membership.

The Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey pre-assessment results determined areas of overall strengths and weaknesses in the six topics discussed in the church membership course. Additional time was given toward topic areas with a low mean. The Biblical Membership Evaluation Survey post-assessment results demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-assessment scores. The end result of this project, therefore, produced a people who understand the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps toward church membership

CHAPTER 5

PROJECT EVALUATION

Introduction

Planting an international church in Paris, France, has its challenges. The challenges of a new church plant are minimized when a church membership course is developed and implemented in the beginning stages of a plant. Emmanuel International Church had received guests and regular attenders for almost a year before the development and implementation of this project. It was imperative that a membership course be established for the sake of unity and for the glory of God.

Although the Scriptures do not highlight a six-lesson church membership course for the early church, multiple inferences in God's Word indicate that believers will attach and identify themselves with the local church. The local church will consist of believers who are united in essential Christian doctrine, unified in the purpose and direction of the church, and partnered together as the covenant community of God.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and implement a church membership curriculum for Emmanuel International Church of Ternes (EICT) in Paris, France. The sermon series on church membership provided the opportunity to make a biblical case for membership. Once individuals were convinced that membership was a biblical concept, the course served to unite believers in biblical conviction and the beliefs of EICT, the local church.

To develop this project, it was imperative that the pastoral panel supported my research, approved of the curriculum content, and participated in the practical matters

involved in the implementation stage. A pastoral panel served as an advisory board. They were consulted multiple times throughout the process. Their involvement in the planning and preparation was essential as the workload required the assistance of many to ensure the success of this project.

Because the pastoral panel was included in this project, participants were confident that this project would be worth their time and well crafted. The congregation interpreted this project to be a team endeavor. More than one leader in the church stressed the importance of church membership. The entire pastoral panel advertised the course. Although I led every aspect of this project, the development and implementation stages did not look like a solo project created only by me and administered only to earn a doctoral degree.

Furthermore, soliciting the participation of the pastoral panel in the development and implementation of the course gave the panel a sense of ownership in this project. Their convictions and advice were included in the development of the curriculum. The completed project, therefore, required I delegate, listen to, and oversee the work of others for the overall good of EICT.

Finally, the participation of the pastoral panel also developed the ministry experience of the pastoral intern. Before this project, the pastoral intern had little experience in the development and implementation of church membership curriculum. After the project, the pastoral intern had gained valuable experience thinking through his biblical convictions and then teaching those convictions to the body during the course.

The purpose of this project was successfully met. The small building located in Paris, France, is now filled with believers who willfully and biblically identify themselves as the local body of Christ. EICT is united in the vision and mission of the church. The sermon series identified the need to attach oneself with the church, and the members positively responded by signing up for the course. The pastoral panel gladly participated, and the pastoral intern learned a great deal in his convictions regarding church membership.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

Four goals determined the successful completion of this project. These goals, although not perfect, were successfully met.

Goal 1

The first goal of this project was to assess the convictions of a pastoral panel on essential content and practical matters that must be considered in membership curriculum for an international church. An EICMI survey was transmitted electronically to the Emmanuel International Church of Ternes church planting pastor, the pastor of Emmanuel International Church of Rueil Malmaison, and the pastoral intern. This goal was considered successfully met when the pastoral panel's views on the functionality of the course, the content of the curriculum, and action steps after the course were identified and assessed. The results of the EICMI survey were surprising.

It was difficult to ascertain what the pastoral panel wanted to be included in the curriculum. The survey revealed, for example, that the pastoral panel did not place a high value on cross-cultural complexities such as honor/shame, fear/power, and guilt/innocence. I considered this topic to be extremely important as it would deter possible miscommunications amongst a diverse population. An international church is filled with cultures who view life differently than Americans. Honor and shame, for example, is a major concept to consider when ministering to a North African Muslim. The low mean, discussed in chapter 4, indicated to me the pastoral staff was not aware of cultural differences and complexities or they did not desire to see them implemented in a church membership course. I did not want to delay in the development of the curriculum. I did not, therefore, take the time to express what I believed was a necessary part of instruction. Unfortunately, I included little content in regard to cross-cultural complexities in the curriculum based on the feedback from the pastoral panel.

One of the lowest mean scores was attributed to spiritual gifts. The pastoral staff did not believe it was necessary to include spiritual gifts as a significant topic in a

church membership course. After a brief discussion with the pastoral panel in regard to the mean scores, it was revealed to me that many new attendees have approached the staff to express their need to practice their spiritual giftedness. Those who approach the pastors often believe he or she is gifted to lead. The pastoral panel believed teaching spiritual gifts would increase the amount of people desiring to lead in the church. Based on the feedback of the pastoral panel, and against my biblical convictions regarding spiritual gifts in the church, little is mentioned about spiritual gifts in the church membership curriculum.

Other survey questions revealed that the pastoral staff did not believe it was appropriate to teach the basics of evangelizing Europeans. Although the vision to reach one's neighbors for Christ was stressed, providing practical evangelism tips was deemed unnecessary as a component of the curriculum. I do not believe the pastoral panel is against evangelism; rather, evangelism is to be taught outside of a church membership course.

There were, however, encouraging aspects of the curriculum that the pastoral panel understood to be important. The requirement for potential members, for example, to affirm EICT's Statement of Faith is an important step toward unity and an essential element in church membership curriculum. The responsibilities of both leaders and members must be included in the curriculum, and the pastoral panel overwhelmingly agreed. The time of year, the time allotted for the course, and the expectations of a person desiring membership was clearly brought to light and efficiently assessed.

Goal 1 was a success as it assessed the essential components and practical matters that the pastoral panel preferred in a church membership curriculum. In the end I was pleased by the overall curriculum content. My preferences were set aside and the project moved forward in the development stage.

Goal 2

The second goal of this project was to develop six lessons based upon the agreed upon components of membership by a pastoral panel that would lead to church membership. The CMCE was administered to determine the success of this goal. The results of the CMCE identified some of the philosophical views of the pastoral panel, and pertinent material the pastoral panel believed was missing from the church membership curriculum. Also, the CMCE revealed the importance of clearly identifying the teaching styles and methods used to address the participants in the course.

The comments provided in the CMCE revealed I did not include questions about child safety or strategic partnerships in the EICMI survey. The foundation of the content was established, but smaller details that were considered important to the pastoral staff were not adequately assessed. Fortunately, the comments provided in the CMCE identified specific components that the pastoral panel wanted to see in the curriculum. A section identifying the child safety policy of EICT and a handout identifying partnerships with EICT were identified and discussed during the implementation of the curriculum.

Goal 2 also identified the philosophical views of the pastoral staff. I was not aware that EICT and EICRM desired to share the same vision statement. As a church planter, I inferred that the EICT would be autonomous and would work toward a similar but unique vision crafted by the leadership of EICT. My oversight required a revision of the curriculum that reflected the shared vision of EICT and EICRM.

The EICMI survey used in goal 1 evaluated the desires of the pastoral panel concerning the content of the curriculum as opposed to the styles and methods of teaching. The CMCE revealed that teaching styles and methods was important to the pastoral panel. Providing detailed notes that included discussion questions with answers allowed leaders in the future to teach the membership course with ease. Highlighting the objectives of each lesson permitted leaders to adapt their styles and methods of teaching to fit their own personality and preferences.

Once the philosophical differences of the pastoral panel were identified, along with their shared concerns over styles and methods, I incorporated the pastoral panel into the implementation of the curriculum. It was evident to me that the intense convictions of the pastor panel required their participation for the church membership course to be a success. Hence, as I prepared the curriculum, I assigned teaching times for the church planting pastor and pastoral intern for EICT. The EICRM pastor had a previous engagement and could not attend the church membership course.

Although a revision of the curriculum was needed, goal 2 was successfully met because 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded sufficiency. The result was a curriculum that the leadership panel endorsed and was excited about implementing. Overall, the survey sufficiently identified the pastoral views and enhanced the overall content of the curriculum.

Goal 3

The third goal was to partner with a member of the pastoral panel to teach a four-week sermon series on church membership to promote church-wide participation in the implementation stage of the church membership course. The first sermon was preached by the church planting pastor of EICT. He chose to preach on covenant relationships. His first message stressed that Christians who have covenanted with Christ will covenant with Christ's church. The second message was also chosen and preached by the EICT church planting pastor. He focused on God's design for believers to live in community. After the church planting pastor had chosen his messages, he then allotted two consecutive Sundays for me to preach on church membership. The third message explained how the world watching the visible church recognizes the powerful impact the gospel has on human lives. The fourth and final message focused on identifying with the local church. Identifying oneself with a local church distinguishes believers from those who are in rebellion with God, permits the church to affirm one as a member of God's new priesthood, and when the church gathers, one may be confident that they are worshipping

the one true God. Goal 3 complimented the previous two goals as the congregation was presented with a case for biblical membership.

The success of this goal was determined by the number of participants interested in church membership. It was my experience in previous churches that believers struggle to understand why membership into the local church is necessary. The four sermons worked well in addressing misconceptions about membership. I have also encountered individuals who identified themselves as members of a church, yet these individuals did not understand the implications of church membership. The four sermons informed the congregation of the implications of being a member of the local body.

Several participants signed up for the course but did not attend all or any of the messages preached during the church membership sermon series. This was noted prior to the implementation of the course and permitted me to include some of the information from the sermon series into the curriculum of the course. One cannot stress enough the importance of biblical church membership.

Furthermore, it was clear that few were in attendance for all four messages in the series. The four messages were individually prepared to communicate the importance of membership. If a participant did not understand the concept of covenant relationships because he or she was not present during the first message, then the other messages were sufficient in stating the case for church membership.

Goal 3 was successfully met as the four-week sermon series was completed and more than 10 participants signed up for the course. The responsibilities of goal 3 were shared with the EICT pastor. Fortunately, the sporadic attendance did not affect the number of participants. The successful completion of this goal permitted me to move forward in the project.

Goal 4

The fourth goal was to implement the curriculum and increase the biblical knowledge of participants taking the course. This success of this goal required a careful

balance between finances, information, and time. The knowledge of potential members grew in subject areas such as the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps toward church membership.

The cost to print handouts, rent the church building on a Saturday afternoon, and provide snack and refreshments risked making the course impossible for future implementation. The low budget of EICT required the course to begin in the afternoon to avoid purchasing lunch for the participants. The church building was available to rent by the hour and only between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Three hours was all the church could afford. Information handouts were sparse to minimize the expense of paper and ink. To alleviate some of the budget concerns, a lot of my own personal finances were used to complete the implementation stage of this project.

The detailed lesson plans and objectives in the curriculum allowed me and those I delegated to teach specific topics to instruct with ease. Providing a detailed curriculum allows the pastoral staff to continue with the implementation stage when I am no longer present. Allowing the pastoral panel to teach specific topics served as an effective training ground for the pastoral intern and permitted the church planting pastor to communicate his own ministry convictions without hinderance.

Further planning is needed to adjust the price of the membership course. Future implementation may require a small fee from participants to offset the cost of paper and ink. Also, it would be wise to request potential members to prepare and bring a snack to this event. The cost of food and refreshments only adds to the expense of the building and material.

Overall, goal 4 was successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre- and post-assessment scores. Participants taking the course grew in biblical knowledge at the

conclusion of the church membership course. Potential members, therefore, are now unified in the areas of importance revealed by the pastoral panel in goals 1 and 2.

Strengths of the Project

This section addresses five specific strengths in regard to this project. Some of the strengths were expected. However, a couple of strengths I did not anticipate during the development and implementation process.

Meaningful Discussions

Church planting teams must be effective communicators. If a member of a church planting team infers something is true, but has not consulted the team for clarity, then disaccord is inevitable. The development of the Essentials in International Church Membership Inventory (EICMI) served to identify the preferences of the pastoral panel, but also served as an effective instrument to create meaningful discussions on the direction of the church.

Based on the observations made during the first year of EICT, it was evident that few attendees were willing to participate in the daily life of the church. Many in attendance were spectators as opposed to spiritually-gifted believers eager to use their God-given gifts for the building up of Christ's church. To encourage the body to engage in the work of the church, I had surmised that the pastoral panel would agree that a spiritual gifts inventory and a section on spiritual gifts should be included in the curriculum. The surprisingly low mean of 3.3 indicated that the pastoral panel did not believe the topic of spiritual gifts should be discussed in a church membership course. This realization sparked a meaningful discussion about the nuances of an international church. According to the pastoral panel, many new attenders approach the pastoral panel to communicate their spiritual giftedness. However, most new attenders believed they are gifted to lead and preach. In reaction to this repeated behavior, the pastoral panel preferred to avoid the topic and instead spend time with a new attender to ascertain giftedness.

The EICMI also sufficiently identified the pastoral panel's convictions that evangelism should not be taught during the membership course. Teaching potential members how to evangelize in post-modern Europe scored the lowest mean of 3. The low mean, therefore, indicated that the pastoral pattern did not envision evangelism as a major part of the church membership curriculum. The low mean provoked a meaningful discussion with the pastoral panel about the necessity of equipping others to evangelize Europe. The pastoral panel preferred to utilize the membership course to establish the broad essentials of doctrine and practical matters. Practical matters such as when the church meets for prayer and fellowship.

The discussions inspired by the EICMI were helpful in understanding what the pastoral panel believed to be important. This project strengthened the team by opening lines of communication that were not in existence before the development and implementation stage. The church planting team now understands the convictions of each member. Understanding these convictions will be helpful in future church planting endeavors.

Strong Teamwork

The implementation of this project required the assistance of the entire church planting team of EICT, which includes their spouses. It would have been overwhelming to perform every task needed to complete this project. The details involved in childcare, food and drink, facilities rental, and set-up and breaking down of chairs had to be delegated to ensure successful implementation.

I was encouraged by those who stepped up to fulfill a need. Providing childcare during the implementation stage of this project was a definite need that I was unable to accomplish on my own. My desire was to provide an environment for the children that would give potential members confidence that their children were safe and using their time wisely. My wife, along with the wives of the pastoral panel, worked out many of the details involved in childcare. They worked together to develop a children's

program. They also implemented a teaching schedule permitting them to work with children yet participate in the membership course.

The pastoral team also worked together to provide food and drink during the membership course. The membership course schedule included a break between sessions 2 and 3. Using their own financial means, the pastoral team purchased food and drink that enhanced the overall enjoyment of the day. Their service and financial sacrifice was an encouragement to me as I watched the participants relax and enjoy a snack in between sessions.

Many small details involved in this project could easily be overlooked. The procurement of the facilities, for example, could have been a disaster if not for a member of the pastoral team. The building was only free between the hours of 1-4 p.m, and the owner of the facility was reluctant to rent out the facilities between these hours. The pastoral intern volunteered to work with the owner to ensure the membership course could take place. The pastoral intern took the time to meet with the owner for coffee to communicate that the EICT would respect the hours allocated and return the facilities to its original set-up at the conclusion of the membership course. The hours dedicated to this endeavor would have been difficult for me to do on my own.

The strict time restraints required the entire team to arrive early to set-up. Set-up had to be quick and simple to preserve time. The logistics involved in the breaking down of chairs and the overall set-up of the church would have been impossible if done by myself. Because of teamwork, course participants arrived to see the chairs set-up and the children's program ready to go at the appropriate hour. To my surprise, the team was able to return the church to its original set-up in ten minutes. Their hard work permitted me to use as much time as possible to teach the curriculum. I did not have to be concerned with the logistics that I would be unable to accomplish on my own.

Training Ground for Inexperience

The development and implementation stage provided an opportunity for the pastoral intern to gain invaluable experience in church planting. The survey instruments used in the development stage encouraged him to think about the topics he believed needed to be addressed in the membership course. The implementation stage provided him an opportunity to teach the curriculum to potential members.

I did not initially consider this project to be helpful in one's spiritual growth other than myself and the participants in the membership course. As the development stage of this project began to unfold, I quickly realized the value this project had in the development of the pastoral intern of EICT. Prior to arriving in Paris, his ministerial experience involved music ministry in the United States. Asking him to participate in this project as a member of the pastoral panel to evaluate what belongs in the curriculum served as an effective tool to develop his personal convictions. He also had to prayerfully consider the necessity of church membership. His insights were in many ways helpful.

When I realized how effective this project was in the personal development of the pastoral intern, I asked him to teach a section in the church membership curriculum. Giving him this opportunity permitted me to discuss with him how to teach the curriculum. I also stressed the importance of reaching the curriculum objectives. By teaching the curriculum, the pastoral intern gained valuable experience that will enhance his ministry and future endeavors.

Distribution of Information

Before the implementation of the curriculum, the descriptive analysis of the pre-assessment revealed a high standard deviation in all six topics. Potential members, therefore, were not unified in the topics deemed important by the pastoral panel. It was imperative that a large amount of information be taught in a limited amount of time to unify the participants in their beliefs and understanding of church policies.

The curriculum was designed to engage the participation of potential members. It was never my intention to lecture for hours and pray the information was successfully obtained. Instead, questions were asked requiring a response from participants. Once the participants were engaged, handouts were provided for review and discussion. I also allocated time for a question and answer session at the end of each lesson. I believe the low standard deviation scores revealed in the post-assessment could be attributed to the styles and methods of teaching implanted during the course. Because the course was not primarily filled with lecture material, a large amount of information was successfully received and retained by the solicited involvement of the participants.

Strong Participation

The EICT is not a large church. Average attendance ranges between 30-40 people. Weekly visitors may double the size of the congregation depending on the time of year. Although many who signed up for the course were not in attendance for all four messages in the church membership sermon series, the stand-alone messages served to strengthen the participation of the church body.

Almost every regular attender participated in the church membership course. One could speculate why this was the case. I believe the strong participation originated by the sermon series stressing biblical church membership. Crafting the messages that stressed membership, without having to hear all four messages, was a strategic strength that likely could be attributed to the high number of participants.

Weaknesses of the Project

This project had three weaknesses. The weaknesses of this project must be corrected to ensure it endures long into the future.

Church Planting Strategies

In preparation of this project, I had assumed this church plant would commence the same way I have worked on other church plants. The goal in previous plants was to

work toward autonomy. The established church, therefore, would assist the new church plant while the new church works toward an individual and unique vision. Leaders would be established within the new plant. Once leadership was established, the established church would become less involved in the activities of the new church. The EICMI assessed what the pastoral panel believed important in the curriculum, but it did not assess the pastoral panel's strategy of church planting. Through the comments in the Components of Membership Evaluation (CME), it was revealed that the vision of EICRM would be the vision of EICT. The comments by the EICRM pastor sparked a conversation indicating that the church planting strategy of the pastoral panel was to create a multi-campus church with an identical vision and partnerships. Because the surveys did not reveal this information early in the development of the project, the revisions to the curriculum were significant. I did not, for example, incorporate the vision of EICRM into the church membership curriculum until the second revision. I inferred that the vision of EICT would be formed after the installation of leaders in the church. Once I realized the vision would remain the same, the combined vision of EICT and EICRM became a prominent subject in the curriculum. The EICMI and the CME, therefore, did not reveal information regarding the pastoral panel's church planting strategies.

Financial Investment

For the church membership course to continue in the coming years, the cost to implement the course must be significantly minimized. The rental fee for a building in Paris is outrageous. Renting the space for three hours minimized the cost, but the pricing for food, drink, and materials limit how many times this project may be implemented within the year.

The majority of the cost for food and drink was absorbed by me and the pastoral panel. It is not realistic to assume individuals will continue to supplement the total cost of the bill. In addition, as the number of participants grows, the cost for food and drink will significantly increase. Providing a membership course free of charge for

participants is the right thing to do, but it may not be a realistic endeavor when considering the EICT's limited budget.

The cost of materials required financial means as well. Although the cost was not as significant as food, drink, and rental fees, future implementation must consider the cost of the handouts, writing utensils, and folders. When the expenses are combined into one bill, the total cost is between 500-1000 euros.

Limited Building Usage

The implementation of this project was rushed. The building was only available for three hours. Set-up, therefore, required the team to arrive five minutes early to set up for the course. Cleaning up and returning everything to its original space was done in ten minutes.

The course was implemented in France, where personal relationships and time together are an important aspect of the culture. To ensure these relationships were nurtured and time was allocated for fellowship, the pastoral team ushered everyone outside of the church. Most of the time spent together after the completion of the course was spent outside of the church. This time would have been better spent inside of the church, but unfortunately another event was scheduled shortly after the conclusion of the membership course. Not having a space of our own to implement the course regularly will be a future hardship.

What I Would Do Differently

Looking back, I would have done multiple things differently. The project was a success, but the development and implementation stages could have been a smoother process if I would have made some changes.

Pastoral Interviews

The pastoral panel consisted of men with strong convictions. The EICRM pastor, for example, believed strongly in EICT guarding the same vision as EICRM. The

church planting pastor of EICT could not envision himself not playing a role in the implementation stage. There were topics, for example, that he wanted to implement personally that he did not want included specifically in the curriculum. If I were to do this project over again, I would begin the project by interviewing the individual members of the pastoral panel.

An interview with the EICRM pastor would have permitted him to share his convictions regarding what belongs in an international church membership course. An interview would permit me to note his beliefs and inquire additional information. The EICMI would have contained more specific and succinct questions and possibly fewer questions. Question 27, for example, on the EICMI asked if the membership course needed to be implemented twice a year. An interview would have revealed this information allowing me to eliminate this question from the survey. Also, I would have learned a great deal about his church planting strategies permitting me to develop a curriculum requiring minimal revisions. I spent a great deal of time revising the curriculum to highlight and stress the combined vision of EICT and EICRM.

Interviewing the church planting pastor would have revealed his desire to be included in the course and to participate in the development and implementation of the curriculum. Because I was unaware in the early stages of development of his desire to participate, I translated his oversight as micromanaging. Sitting down with him in advance would have minimized some of the conflict that occurred because of this oversight. Also, I could have made a goal to delegate some of the material to the pastoral panel, which would have been a wise decision given the personalities of the pastoral panel.

In a rush, perhaps, I moved forward in the development stage without sitting down with men who clearly had a stake in the outcome of this project. Sitting down with them individually to hear their thoughts would have saved significant time and energy as I moved forward. I treated this project as if it was mine to control. This is never a good way to think when working on a team.

Assessment Instruments

One question on the EICMI inquired if the course should be taught during an afternoon. It did not, unfortunately, specify the total duration of the course. If I had known in advance that the course would be implemented in three hours, then the survey would have been used to measure the importance of topics. Though, no one knew the limited availability of the building during the development of this project. Understanding the pastoral panel's preference on time, however, would have been advantageous during the development stage. During the implementation of the course, I would have known in advance what material was expendable for the sake of time. Creating a category of topics and surveying the pastoral panel using a rating scale would have helped me determine how important the inclusion of these topics would be in the curriculum. Because there was no rating scale in the assessment stage of the development, I may have focused on areas I believed were important as opposed to the preferences of the pastoral panel.

Furthermore, my limited experience in assessing data prevented me from incorporating qualitative data. I regret not including open-ended questions. Including open-ended questions, especially with only three pastors on the panel, would have added to the overall effectiveness of the survey in determining the convictions and preferences of those surveyed.

Better Communication

Everyone on the pastoral panel had multiple projects in process during the development and implementation of this project. Developing a platform to effectively communicate would have been advantageous to this project and respectful of the limited time of the pastoral panel. Better communication would have added to the overall success of the course.

Most communication was done through email. A biweekly meeting or phone call would have improved the overall communication process. Because communication was inefficient and sporadic, the implementation of the church membership sermon series

was much earlier than I had expected. The church planting pastor of EICT made the decision when and who would preach the sermon series. Committing to a biweekly phone call would have revealed that I was not ready to implement the project so early in the year. The lack of communication caused the sermon series to begin before the membership curriculum was prepared and evaluated by the panel.

If I were to do this project again, I would have created a tentative meeting schedule approved by the pastoral panel. Included in the schedule would be times and places of possible meetings to discuss the progress of the project. Effective communication would have minimized the stress of the overall project.

Theological Reflections

Through this project I have learned much regarding what Scripture says about church membership. I have grown to understand how the church glorifies God, and how the local church can be a witness for God. The very existence of the church supports the life changing power of the gospel.

God Is Sovereign

A project of this size nurtures an affection for God's sovereignty. Ephesians 1:11b states that God "works all things according to the counsel of his will." Proverbs 21:30 proclaims, "No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord." Nothing can thwart God's sovereign plan. Everything, even the seemingly impossible, is orchestrated by the profound wisdom of the sovereign God.

The apostle Paul speaks of the "mystery" of God's sovereign plan. In Ephesians 3:8b-10, Paul identifies the mystery stating his ministry was devoted to preaching the "unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." God's sovereign plan, therefore, causes those in the heavenly places to

marvel at the profound wisdom of God as he orchestrates incomprehensible events that are seemingly impossible. Members who identify themselves with the local church cause those in the heavenly realms to glorify God's profound wisdom revealed according to his sovereign plan.

God Is Building His Church

Church growth is not rooted in a program. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18b, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." God is building his church. The church is built as the gospel is proclaimed and hearts are changed.

The apostle Paul states in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." The gospel changes lives to the point where believers no longer identify their lives as their own; rather, Christ becomes their life. As individuals die to their old way of life by responding in repentance and faith, they become members of God's universal church. Those who identify with Christ will attach themselves to Christ's church, the local body in a given community.

God's Word Is Eternal

Isaiah 55:11b states that God's Word "shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Teaching the Word of God is a wise endeavor, therefore, with eternal significance. Personal opinions or the wisdom of man are earthly solution to a spiritual problem.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (Matt 10:27). A church membership curriculum must be developed founded on God's Word. Believers from all walks of life will unite as they follow the teachings of their shepherd. Second Timothy 3:16-17 confirms, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that

the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” There is no other way to equip believers for the eternal realities in this world but by the Word of God.

Personal Reflections

One could not invest such time and energy in an endeavor and be left unchanged. This project provoked a tremendous amount of personal reflection. I learned a great deal about myself, my God, and the mission of the church.

I am Finite

A humble reality in leading God’s church is often uncovered when one begins ministry. The work of the church requires a team effort. I could not have accomplished this project without the help of others. Fortunately, God has surrounded me with men and women in the church who are better equipped to lead in specific endeavors. My finite abilities came to light as this project forced me to delegate responsibilities.

Perfection is unreachable by man, but in Christ, God’s grace proves sufficient when presented with challenges. During this project, I regularly went to the Lord in prayer to confess my own personal weakness and to praise him for sending his one and only son. Christ met the standard I am unable to achieve and am incapable of reaching by my own merit. Watching others help me in this project when I was incapable of accomplishing the task was a humbling reality. Trusting God that everything would work out according to his timing was a lesson in faith.

Serving God Is a Pleasure

During the development and implementation of this project, there were multiple occasions to renew my mind (Rom 12:1). The tremendous amount of work involved in this project required a mind fixed on Christ. I often reminded myself of the importance of church membership and the eternal realities of such an endeavor. The long hours required for the success of this project was nothing but a blessing. When I experienced times of discouragement or felt the stress of deadlines, I consistently reminded myself that serving

the Lord is a pleasure. Encouraging others to identify with Christ's church is never done in vain. All of the effort invested in this project would serve to build up the church until Christ's immanent return.

It Is Not about Me

This project served as a reminder that the church is more than just the convictions of one man. Using a pastoral panel to evaluate and provide input in the development and implementation of my project caused me to let go of a lot of information I believed to be essential in church membership curriculum. Withholding what I believed was valuable information was difficult. The irony, however, is most of my disagreements with the pastoral panel were linked to God shaping the church according to his pleasure. At the end of the project, I realized it was me who desired to restrict the general direction of the church. I did not want to honor the wishes of the pastoral panel because I believed my research superseded their experience.

I must practice what I preach and allow other God-gifted individuals to participate and share input in the regular happenings of the church. Christ's church will look the way that he desires according to the gifted servants he adds to the church. As a leader in the church, I am called to shepherd the flock. Leading according to my own personal preferences and disregarding the thoughts and ideas of fellow believers is not God's will for his church.

Conclusion

This project served to unify Emmanuel International Church of Ternes. The work invested in development and implementation of a church membership course was a worthwhile endeavor as it accomplished what I had hoped. Believers are now pursuing membership into the local church in Paris, France. Regular attenders at Emmanuel International Church have grown in their understanding of the purpose of a membership

course, the power of the gospel, the vision of EICT, the responsibilities of leaders and members, the importance of child safety, and the next steps towards church membership.

When planting churches, a long list of priorities must be considered for the health of the church. The development and implementation of a church membership curriculum is one of the primary efforts of a church planter. The goals of this ministry project served to unify a small and diverse population of local believers with various theological convictions and little knowledge of the necessity to identify with the local body. Although not perfect in its development, the church membership course did identify the importance of identifying with the local body and united Emmanuel International Church of Ternes in both Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

By God's grace, the implementation of this project will continue for many years. Lord willing, I will be able to include this curriculum in future church plants. It brings me tremendous joy knowing that the knowledge gained from this project and experience accrued will continue to serve me in my future ministry endeavors.

Looking back, Emmanuel International Church of Ternes began with a handful of people from different walks of life. When I consider where the church was just one year ago, I am overwhelmed to see where it is today. God has used this project to build up believers in the faith and unite this church in Christ. As the gospel continues to advance, I pray that this project is utilized to continue to build up the body to full maturity in Christ and for the glory of his name.

APPENDIX 1

ESSENTIALS IN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP INVENTORY

The following instrument is the Essentials in International Church Membership Inventory (EICMI). This is a thirty-question survey with a six-point Likert scale. The instrument's purpose is to assess the essential components that must be included in membership curriculum in an international church setting and to determine preferences such as the duration of the class and location of the membership course.

ESSENTIALS IN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH
MEMBERSHIP INVENTORY

Agreement to Participate

Emmanuel International Church is committed to providing English language ministry to glorify God in the rich and global region of Paris, France. One of the ways we fulfill this commitment is by offering membership into the local church. We want to see people come out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light as they identify themselves with the local body and engage in kingdom service. We also desire to unite believers from all over the world in the essentials of the faith and to enjoy the blessings of local church membership. In light of this vision, we want to determine what are the essential components that should be adapted into a church membership course at Emmanuel International Church. This survey for leaders of Emmanuel International church will help us assess the functionality, content, and action steps for church membership.

This research is being conducted by S. Ryan Powell for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because ministry is relational, we prefer that you include your name below, rather than completing the survey anonymously. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, please use the last four digits of your social security number or phone number for future reference.

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Gender _____ **Age** _____

Directions: Please mark the appropriate answer. Some questions may ask you to give your opinion using the following scale:

SD = strongly disagree

D = disagree

DS = disagree somewhat

AS = agree somewhat

A = agree

SA = strongly agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. The duration of a church membership course should not exceed an afternoon. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. The location of a church membership course should be in proximity of the church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. Information and materials for a church membership course should be provided electronically. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. Saturdays are good days to implement a church membership course. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. Childcare should be provided for a church membership course. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Fall is a good season to implement a church membership course. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Church membership curriculum must stress unity in the midst of diversity. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. Church membership curriculum must stress differences in personalities. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. Church membership curriculum must stress cultural complexities such as honor/shame, power/fear, and guilt/innocence. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. Church membership curriculum must address essential Christian doctrine. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. Church members must agree to EIC's Statement of Faith. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. Church membership curriculum must identify spiritual gifts. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. Church membership curriculum must include a spiritual gifts inventory. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

14. Church membership curriculum must identify opportunities to serve in the church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
15. Spiritual disciplines should be included and discussed in church membership curriculum.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
16. The Great Commission is an important topic in church membership curriculum.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. Members must sign an affirmation of EIC's Statement of Faith.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. The expectations of a church member must be included in church membership curriculum.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. An explanation of church ordinances must be included in church membership curriculum.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. An interview by an EIC pastor is mandatory for membership.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. Church membership curriculum must include how to evangelize in Europe.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. Church membership curriculum must include an explanation of the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. Church members must be able to articulate the gospel.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Church membership curriculum must identify the responsibilities of church leadership.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. Church membership curriculum must include a questionnaire seeking background information of potential members.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. Church membership curriculum must include essential elements of corporate worship.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. A church membership course should be offered at least two times a year.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. Participation in a church membership course should be limited to those in Paris longer than six months.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 29. A church membership course must be established and implemented during the same time period every year. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 30. A pastor must contact those who have completed the church membership course to follow-up on instruction. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Additional comments, questions, and/or concerns:

APPENDIX 2

COMPONENTS OF MEMBERSHIP COURSE EVALUATION

The following evaluation will be completed EICT and EICRM leaders who have reviewed the course curriculum. They will evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, scope, and applicability of the curriculum

Name of evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Components of Membership Course Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the course is biblically and theologically sound.					
The course is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.					
Methodology					
The course sufficiently addresses the unique dynamics of an international audience.					
The course makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role play and homework.					
Scope					
The course meets the goals and objectives of the EIC.					
The course meets the constraints of a transient population.					

APPENDIX 3

BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP EVALUATION SURVEY

The following evaluation was completed by potential members before and after the implementation of the membership curriculum. This evaluation assessed one's understanding of the purpose of membership, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps toward church membership.

BIBLICAL MEMBERSHIP EVALUATION SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

Emmanuel International Church is committed to providing English language ministry to glorify God in the rich and global region of Paris, France. One of the ways we fulfill this commitment is by offering membership into the local church. We want to see people come out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light as they identify themselves with the local body and engage in kingdom service. We also desire to unite believers from all over the world in the essentials of the faith and to enjoy the blessings of local church membership. In light of this vision, we want to determine your understanding of essential Christian doctrine and the biblical basis of church membership. This survey will help EIC leadership assess your understanding of the purpose of a membership course, the power of the gospel, the vision of the church, responsibilities of leaders and members, child safety, and the next steps towards church membership.

This research is being conducted by S. Ryan Powell for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are providing informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Because ministry is relational, we prefer that you include your name below, rather than completing the survey anonymously. If you prefer to be anonymous, however, please use the last four digits of your social security number or phone number for future reference.

Date: _____

Name (or 4 digit code): _____

Directions: Based on the following scale, circle the response that best represents your agreement with the statement:

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, DS= Disagree Somewhat,
AS= Agree Somewhat, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 1. I know where I may find the church's covenant, statement of faith, and child protection policy. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 2. I understand the importance of a church membership course. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 3. I understand the unique dynamics of an international church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 4. I have a deep understanding of the gospel. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 5. I understand how the gospel changes lives. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. Repentance is not a necessary response to the gospel. One only needs to believe in Jesus | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and he rose again the third day. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. Faith in God is a private relationship between God and man. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. EIC 'Ternes has partnered with other gospel-centered organizations. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I know well the vision of EIC. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. Communion and baptism affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. Sunday gatherings are designed to remind us of God's unfolding history of redemption. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 13. I have a firm understanding of biblical worship. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. The virgin birth is an important teaching in the church. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. A church that practices church discipline is following the Bible. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

16. Christians should hold other Christians accountable against sinful patterns in life.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
17. I know when and where the church meets during the week.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
18. There are no outreach activities in progress at EIC.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
19. I understand well the leadership structure at EIC.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
20. All members of EIC must share the same beliefs, even non-essential beliefs.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
21. A covenant relationship with Christ is a covenant relationship with his church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
22. A spiritually healthy church is a financially generous church.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
23. Christians are called to financially support global missions.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
24. Children under the age of 18 are not permitted to be in charge of the nursery.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
25. When working with children, touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
26. Only individuals who work with children must affirm the child protection policy of EIC.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
27. An adult should never be left alone with a child while at an official church event	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
28. I understand what I must do to become a member of EIC.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
29. I know what to expect in the church membership interview.	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
30. EIC members must affirm the EIC church covenant, agree to the EIC statement of faith, and welcome the way EIC practices church discipline.'	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

APPENDIX 4

ESSENTIALS IN INTERNATIONAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RESULTS

Table A1. Essentials in International Church Membership results

Statement	Mean Score Utilizing a six-point Likert Scale
1. The duration of a church membership course should not exceed an afternoon.	4
2. The location of a church membership course should be in proximity of the church.	4.3
3. Information and materials for a church membership course should be provided electronically.	4.3
4. Saturdays are good days to implement a church membership course.	4.3
5. Childcare should be provided for a church membership course.	5
6. Fall is a good season to implement a church membership course.	5.3
7. Church membership curriculum must stress unity in the midst of diversity.	5.3
8. Church membership curriculum must stress differences in personalities.	4
9. Church membership curriculum must stress cultural complexities such as honor/shame, power/fear, and guilt/innocence.	3.6
10. Church membership curriculum must address essential Christian doctrine.	5
11. Church members must agree to EIC's Statement of Faith.	5.3
12. Church membership curriculum must identify spiritual gifts.	3.3
13. Church membership curriculum must include a spiritual gifts inventory.	2.3
14. Church membership curriculum must identify opportunities to serve in the church.	4.6
15. Spiritual disciplines should be included and discussed in church membership curriculum.	3.6
16. The Great Commission is an important topic in church membership curriculum.	5
17. Members must sign an affirmation of EIC's Statement of Faith.	4.6
18. The expectations of a church member must be included in church membership curriculum.	5.6

Table A1 continued

19. An explanation of church ordinances must be included in church membership curriculum.	4.3
20. An interview by an EIC pastor is mandatory for membership.	5.6
21. Church membership curriculum must include how to evangelize in Europe.	3
22. Church membership curriculum must include an explanation of the gospel.	2.8
23. Church members must be able to articulate the gospel.	5
24. Church membership curriculum must identify the responsibilities of church leadership.	5.3
25. Church membership curriculum must include a questionnaire seeking background information of potential members.	3.6
26. Church membership curriculum must include essential elements of corporate worship.	4
27. A church membership course should be offered at least two times a year.	5.6
28. Participation in a church membership course should be limited to those in Paris longer than six months.	3.3
29. A church membership course must be established and implemented during the same time period every year.	4
30. A pastor must contact those who have completed the church membership course to follow-up on instruction.	3.6

Additional comments, questions, and/or concerns:

EICT Intern commented: I think it is essential to identify the key goals for the membership course. There are many issues (like doctrine) which will be fleshed out over time, and so for example we focus on the broad essentials and make sure they are understood and affirmed by all members. For that reason I also believe it is necessary to teach the expectations and regular rhythms of church membership but on a broad scale. So that what a new member is affirming, especially if he or she is a new Christian, is a basic commitment that any born again Christian would be able to understand and affirm. Therefore it should be doctrinal and practical. Finally, I think our context necessitates certain things be taught to begin to get those ideas in the heads and hearts of our people. I think this might need to be separated out into a section “Our Context: Being Christ’s Church in Global Paris”. Then we could outline several key strategic emphases (like evangelism in a post-Christian context, spiritual disciplines and accountability in a busy city environment, etc.).

Hope this is helpful! One more thought – I do believe that the frequency of these is a big strategic question. We have a great opportunity to disciple believers who are here for a short time. This may need to be explained and a vision cast for “making the most of your time in France”. Otherwise we may consistently face an obstacle of folks not showing interest in joining “since I won’t be here very long.” The ‘sending’ is one aspect of this, I think the ‘serving’ aspect is another, and coming under the authority and teaching of the local church no matter what season of life we are in are some critical biblical reasons that come to my mind.

EICT Church Planting Pastor commented: The key thing in understanding my responses is the word “must” in most of the statements. Yes, these are all good things, but

“must” they be included in our membership curriculum? Probably not. Like in a good sermon, the skill is in knowing what good things to cut (and leave for another time). Because if we try to do too much, we risk detracting from those things which are most essential.

APPENDIX 5
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CURRICULUM

Membership Course Schedule

1:00-1:15	What are we doing today? What do we hope to accomplish? Is this really necessary?
1:15-1:30	The gospel that transforms
1:30-2:10	The vision that moves us forward
2:10-2:30	The coffee we hope to drink
2:30-3:10	The church and our role
3:10-3:30	The future we safeguard
3:30-4:00	Our next steps

Lesson 1

Introduction to the handout materials. Review schedule. Q and A. (10 min)

Objective: Participants will understand what is contained in the handout material, the purpose of the material, and the overall structure of the membership course.

Welcome and Prayer

I want to welcome you to the first ever church membership course for Emmanuel International Church of Ternes (pause for applause)! In front of you is material created to lead the discussion and to better explain the on-goings of EIC.

Distribute folder including “Welcoming Others”, “Love, Prayer, Fellowship, and Forgiveness”, “Challies 7 Needs”, “Essentials of the Faith”, “We Are Statements”, “Church Authority”, “Weekly Rhythms”, “Outreach Opportunities”, “Church Covenant”, “EIC Bank Statement”, and “Child Protection Policy” handouts.

This material will guide us today in the membership course. We are glad you are here, but we also know that some of you will not be with us very long. An International church is known for its transient nature. This means we have a very short time to invest in your life, and we want to maximize our time together. These handouts will highlight the foundations of the faith, times we meet together for fellowship, the implications of the gospel, and the EIC’s vision to reach this city. Regardless of how long you are here, we want you to grow and participate in the work God is doing here in Paris.

We also know that an international church is a diverse body of believers. We want to encourage unity in Christ. Our different backgrounds provide a unique and rich experience when we gather together, but cultural differences can cause unintended conflict. This handbook will introduce ways we may welcome one another in a multi-cultural context.

Take a moment to look at our schedule. Today, we want to connect gospel content with gospel conduct. Members of EIC should be able to communicate the gospel and understand the impact the gospel has on the everyday life of a believer.

Members of EIC will support the vision of the EIC. We will define the vision and discuss in detail the implications of the vision. Then, we will take a much-needed break by enjoying a nice cup of coffee or tea.

Following our break, we will look at the leaderships structure we aspire to implement and the responsibilities of a church member of EIC. Finally, we will conclude with a review of our Child Safety policy and the next steps in pursuing membership at EIC Ternes.

Briefly take a moment to explain what the children will be doing during the sessions.
Any questions?

Lesson 2

Connecting Gospel Content with Gospel Conduct (25 min)

Objective: Potential members will hear the gospel and understand the implications of the gospel in a multicultural context.

(15 min)

Open your Bibles to Romans 15:5-7. All of us are at different stages in our walk with God. Some of you have been saved for many years. There may be some here who have just been saved. There are no believers, however, who have not heard and responded to the gospel.

- What is the gospel?

Once participants communicate the gospel, the presenter now needs to communicate how the gospel unites believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from all nations, tongues, peoples, and tribes.

- What are the implications of the gospel?

Read Romans 15:5-7,

“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

- How do we welcome others for the glory of God?
- What does it mean to welcome others as Christ has welcomed you? (Refer to “Welcoming Others” handout)

Here are some key points regarding welcoming¹:

- We are to take the initiative in welcoming others, just as Jesus took the initiative, making them feel valued and respected.
- We accept others where they are, like Jesus did with us, while also loving people too much to leave them there.
- We are to eliminate our own dehumanizing behaviors such as threats, intimidations, power-plays and other ungodly forms of manipulation.
- We accept people as family--this means rejecting as secondary other labels (such as race, age, or nationality) that would divide us.
- We expect that welcoming others in these ways will cost us something, but it will also be for our eternal gain as the church displays Christ’s glory to the world.

Explain: An international church must fight against the tendency of ethnocentrism to maintain the unity in the body of Christ. We must first recognize that we are not immune from being ethnocentric. Second, we must understand that other cultures are valuable in the eyes of God. We at EIC have the unique privilege to unite for the sake of the gospel. Our unity in the midst of diversity is a witness to this city and fulfills the overall vision of Emmanuel International Church. Emmanuel International Church is committed to loving one another, praying for one another, sharing life with one another, and forgiving one another for the sake of the gospel. (Refer to “Love, Prayer, Fellowship, and Forgiveness” handout)

¹ Key point from Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood: Serving the World in Christlike Humility* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 59.

Love in Action

Stephen Rhodes explains, *Hospitality, when you get right down to it, is unnatural. It is difficult to place others first, because our inclination is to take care of ourselves first. Hospitality takes courage. It takes a willingness to risk. But as our Lord reminds us, if we only love those who we are sure will love us and welcome those who will welcome us, then we have done little to share the love of God, for as Jesus says, even the heathen do that. You see, most of us know what true hospitality feels like. It means being received openly, warmly, freely, without any need to prove ourselves. Hospitality makes us feel worthy, because our host assumes we are worthy. This is the kind of hospitality that we have experienced from God and all that God asks is that we go and do likewise, particularly to 'the alien among us.'*²

Praying for Believers

Thabiti Anyabwile states, "Praying for other Christians is a tangible expression of love and care (see Eph. 6:18)."³ Members of EIC are committed to praying for the church family. We pray for wisdom and unity for our leadership (1 Tim. 3:3), for the sanctification of fellow members (1 Thess. 4:3), and for unity among diverse cultures (Jn 17:20-23).

Fellowship the International Way

When believers come together, we must be open to culturally appropriate ways of greetings so that others will feel welcomed and secure in our presence. In France, a kiss on both cheeks is an appropriate way to greet a fellow believer. In much of Asia, physical touch is frowned upon and is not translated as an expression of welcome. A bow or handshake is more appropriate. Members in a multicultural church must be willing to change cultural behaviors for the sake of showing love to others.

Forgive Before Jumping

The differences in cultures are not wrong: they are simply different from our preferences and presuppositions. Duane Elmer provides some steps to help believers avoid premature negative judgments toward cultural differences⁴:

- Recognize you are making a negative judgment. It will serve you well to be able to monitor these kinds of thoughts in virtually every social situation. Ask yourself, am I jumping to a negative conclusion?
- Stop as soon as you recognize you have a negative thought or make a negative remark or negative judgment. Ask whether you have enough information to be negative about that person. Should you suspend judgment, get more information and seek cultural understanding before drawing a conclusion?
- Does the observed behavior violate some clear mandate of Scripture or should it be labeled as a cultural difference?
- If it violates a clear biblical mandate, how can you respond so that you still communicate openness while addressing the concern? This takes great wisdom and should not be done quickly and probably not in the same way as in your own

² Stephen Rhodes, *Where the Nations Meet* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 134, quoted in Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 45.

³ Thabiti M. Anyabwile, *What Is a Healthy Church Member?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 110.

⁴ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Servanthood*, 51.

- culture. If you are not a veteran of several years in a given culture, you should perhaps seek out another mature Christian or local pastor to help you navigate the situation in an appropriate way.
- Try to understand how this difference is part of the larger tapestry of the culture.

KJ (Church planting pastor) closes with identity (10 min)

He will focus on the church-planting and disciple-making we want in our DNA as a church. I'll also say a little about our history and relationship to EIC Rueil that informs our identity.

Lesson 3

A Discussion of EIC's Vision Statement (40 min)

Objective: Potential members will be able to communicate the vision of EIC and connect the vision of EIC with church ordinances, worship, character, spiritual sanctification, gospel partnerships, corporate gatherings, and church discipline.

Ryan Leads

Read the vision statement of EIC:

“A thankful church in Paris. Worshiping Jesus. Trusting the Bible. Believing the gospel. Loving the city.”

Let's unpack with this means.

I. “A thankful church in Paris”

What makes a Christian thankful? The gospel is the foundation of our gratitude. At EIC we regularly come together and remind ourselves why we are thankful. In fact, Sunday gatherings are designed to remind us of God's unfolding history of redemption and to call us to respond in repentance and faith! What is the purpose, for example, of church ordinances? *Briefly review some of the key components of baptism and communion.*

Jonathan Leeman comments,

Through baptism and the Lord's Supper, the church waves the flag and dons the army uniform of our nation. It makes us visible. To be baptized is to identify ourselves with the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as to identify our union with Christ's death and resurrection (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3-5). To receive the Lord's Supper is to proclaim his death and our membership in his body (1 Cor. 11:26-29; cf. Matt. 26:26-29). God wants his people to be known and marked off. He wants a line between the church and the world.⁵

Membership at Emmanuel International Church, therefore, is reserved for those who have obeyed the Lord in believer's baptism. Associate membership is available for gospel-believing Christians who hold a different conviction on baptism. All baptized believers may participate in communion at Emmanuel International Church.

Baptism

- Full immersion
- Profession of faith with evidence of conversion
- Confession of sin
- Display of hope
- Performed only once

Communion

- Identification of Christ's saving work
- Obedience to Christ's command
- Reserved for those who profess Christ
- Sharing in the fruits of Christ's death
- Repeated the first Sunday of the month at EIC

⁵ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), chap. 3, sec. “What is the Local Church,” para. 5, Kindle.

II. “Worshiping Jesus”

John Piper defines worship as, “to know God truly and then respond from the heart to that knowledge by valuing God, treasuring God, prizing God, enjoying God, being satisfied with God above all earthly things. And then that deep, restful, joyful satisfaction in God overflows in demonstrable acts of praise from the lips and demonstrable acts of love in serving others for the sake of Christ.”⁶

For believers, worship is not relegated to the four walls of the church. At EIC, we want to nurture your affections for God by preaching Christ-centered, gospel centered sermons, but we also want to stress the worship of God should not cease in a believer.

How may we worship God in an international church? (*Refer to “Challies 7 Needs” handout*)

Here is a list by Tim Challies highlighting 7 needs your church needs from you⁷:

Be Humble

If you want to learn humility, you need to act humble.

There is no character quality more important than humility. While humility does not come naturally to any of us, it can be learned, because here’s the thing: Humility isn’t a feeling or an attitude—it’s action. If you want to learn humility, you need to act humble. Here are 3 quick tips on cultivating humility:

- Find mature Christians who exemplify humility and spend time around them. Learn from them and learn to be like them.
- Volunteer for the lowliest of tasks. Don’t ask to be in the public eye when you serve but be content to stay in the back. Find joy in doing the lowliest jobs and do them when and where only Jesus will see.
- Get to know Jesus. It was Jesus who said, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:12). And it was Jesus who humbled himself the deepest and was exalted the highest.

Prioritize Church

Every church has people who make the public gatherings of the church a low priority. These are the people who only come to church when it is convenient and who use any excuse to miss a day or miss a service. Every church desperately needs people who will make the public gatherings a top priority. Today is the day to begin elevating the importance of church in your life.

Let me give you two reasons:

- First, you need your church. God made you part of your church for your good. You cannot do life on your own. You aren’t strong enough, you aren’t wise enough, you aren’t mature enough, you aren’t godly enough. Without the beautifully ordinary means of grace you encounter in the church, you won’t make it. Without the support of your brothers and sisters, you won’t make it.
- Second, your church needs you. God made you part of your church for the good of others. 1 Peter 4 says, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another,

⁶ John Piper, “What Is Worship?” accessed February 3, 2020, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-worship>.

⁷ Tim Challies, “7 Things Your Church Needs from You,” October 3, 2014, <https://www.challies.com/christian-living/7-things-your-church-needs-from-you/>.

as good stewards of God's varied grace." God has gifted you to be part of your church, and those gifts are to be used for the good of other people. So prioritize church as an expression of generosity toward others.

Consider Giving God a Day

Why don't you consider setting aside an entire day of the week and dedicating it to the Lord in a special way?

It completely changes Sunday when you give the entire day to the Lord and his people. Now you're not having to decide whether to take that class or join that club that meets Sunday afternoon. You're not skipping church during exam time because you've got studying to do. You're not leaving early to get home before the football game starts. Instead, you're leaving behind all the cares of life, and even many of the joys of life, and dedicating an entire day to worship, to fellowship, and to serving others.

Live Like a Christian All Week Long

It is easy enough to be a Christian at church, but then you get home. But then you go to work. But then you go to school. And then you're surrounded by people acting ungodly, and even worse, you're left along with your own thoughts and your own desires. Yet your church needs you to live like a Christian all week long.

Make your devotional life something you do not just for the good of yourself, but for the good of others.

Each of us faces different challenges and different temptations. But one key to living like a Christian all week long is spending time in Word and prayer every day. Make this a priority no matter how busy you are and no matter how crazy life seems. Make this something you do no matter how badly you've sinned and how little you feel like doing it. Pray day-by-day not only for yourself, but for your church. Take that membership directly and pray through it from A to Z, and then start over. Make your devotional life something you do not just for the good of yourself, but for the good of others.

Get to Know People Not Like You

Churches are involuntary communities—we don't get to pick who comes to them, God does. So what we have to do is learn to live with these people and learn to love these people, even when they are very different from us. "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." If your church is divided so that all the young adults hang out together and all the older folk hang out together, or if all the people with accents hang out together and all the people without accents hang out together, that makes a statement about the gospel—that the gospel is not big enough and powerful enough to really make people love one another even though they are different.

So commit to get to know people not like you. There is no reason you shouldn't be able to say that some of your best and closest relationships are with people who are very different from you.

Learn Generosity

Few things reveal the heart better than money. Money has an amazing way of displaying what you really believe and what you really value. No matter who and what stage of life you are at, there is no better time than now to learn to be generous with your money. Here's what the Bible says: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." You must give, and you must learn to do it cheerfully.

Here are just 2 quick tips:

- Remember that it's not your money. The money belongs to God—he just gives it to you to manage it. And he means for you to manage it well and to his glory.

- Give to the Lord first. I know people who say they can't give to the church, and yet they've got a new cell phone and are carrying a cup of Starbucks into church every week. That doesn't compute. Learn to give the first and best of your money to the Lord. The harder that seems, the more you need to do it.

Be a Great Church Member

Make yourself invaluable to your church and do this by serving other people. I love reading about Dorcas, the woman Peter raised from the dead who was described as being "full of good works and acts of charity" (see Acts 9). "When Peter arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them." Dorcas was a great church member. She loved people so much, and did so much good to them, that the whole community mourned when she died.

Would that be you? Would the people of your church weep as they remember you for all the good you did to others? Find the place you can serve your church, and serve there without fail, without excuse, without requiring praise and accolades. Do it for the good of others and the glory of God.

How may we worship God in everyday life?

Praying Through the Psalms

How often do you pray? Do your prayers sound the same every day? Praying through the Scriptures will ensure that you pray often and your prayers are in line with the Word of God. Praying through the psalms will cause you to grow in the greatness of our God. It will cause your heart to erupt in praise to our holy God. Plus, praying through the psalms will bring a daily freshness to your prayers that many Christians often struggle to achieve.

Here is a brief example by Donald Whitney on how to pray Psalm 23⁸:

You read the first verse- "The LORD is my shepherd"- and you pray something like this: Lord, I thank you that you are my shepherd. You're a good shepherd. You have shepherded me all my life. And, great Shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. O great Shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And, Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that 's before me about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not? I also pray for our under-shepherds at the church. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.

And you continue praying anything else that comes to mind as you consider the words, "The LORD is my shepherd." Then when nothing else comes to mind, you go to the next line: " I shall not want." And perhaps you pray:

Lord, I think you that I've never really been in want. I haven't missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills, for school, for that car?

Maybe you know someone who is in want, and you pray for God's provision for him or her. Or you remember some of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world, and you pray for their concerns.

⁸ Donald Whitney, *Praying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 29.

Stewardship

How are we using the resources God has granted us through his grace? Do we spend our time and money building the Kingdom of God or are we building our own personal kingdom here on earth?

Stewardship is a biblical concept that concerns all aspects of the Christian life, but how we spend our time and money are essential elements of the growth of God's church.

Scriptural references regarding time⁹:

- We must make the most of our time (Eph. 5:15-16)
- We must prepare for eternity (2 Cor. 6:2)
- We must live with purpose (James 4:14)
- We must invest our time wisely (1 Jn. 2:17)
- We must profit from each day (Prov. 27:1)
- We must work diligently (Jn. 9:4)
- We must give an account (Rom. 14:12)

Scriptural references regarding money:

- We must give to God what belongs to him (1 Cor. 10:26; Exo. 19:5; Job 41:11)
- We must give as a worship to God (Phil. 4:18)
- We must give in faith (Mark 12:41-44)
- We must give generously (2 Cor. 8:1-5)
- We must give what has been entrusted to us (Luke 16:10-13)
- We must give from a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:7)
- We must give to those in need (Acts 4:32-35)
- We must give regularly (1 Cor. 16:1-2)

III. "Trusting the Bible"

What we believe about the Bible will result in true worship. A conviction of biblical truth results in biblical actions. *Cover the foundations of the faith:*

Biblical heresy is a constant threat to Christ's church. Leadership at Emmanuel International Church is committed to protecting the flock against dangerous doctrines that are detrimental to the church. Gregg Allison agrees when he refers to a corporate confession of faith serves as a barrier "against a fall into heresy, a slide that is tragically facilitated by the loss of historic consciousness in many churches and denominations."¹⁰ Emmanuel International Church is committed to sound doctrine and affirms the historic faith (*Refer to "Essentials of the Faith" handout*).

The Apostle's Creed¹¹

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus

⁹ Scriptural references taken from Whitney, *Praying the Bible*, 160-68.

¹⁰ Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 138.

¹¹ This version of the Apostle's Creed was produced by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) in 1988. To avoid confusion, the phrase "he (Jesus) descended to the dead" was omitted from this version. This phrase originates from 1 Peter 3:19. R.C. Sproul comments, "People are making a lot of assumptions when they consider that this is a reference to hell and that Jesus went there between his death and his resurrection." R. C. Sproul, "What Does the Apostles' Creed Mean When It Says that Jesus Descended to Hell?" accessed September 23, 2019, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/what-does-apostles-creed-mean-when-it-says-jesus-d/>.

Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Biblical Inerrancy

Defined by Paul Feinberg as *"When all facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they affirm, whether that has to do with doctrine or morality or with the social, physical or life sciences."*¹²

Scripture References: Ex. 20:1, Ex. 32:16; Josh. 24:26-27; Isa. 1:1-2; Jer. 1:1-2; Ezek. 1:3; Matt. 4:4, 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; John 3:11, 7:15-17, 8:28, 10:35, 14:26, 16:12-15; Gal. 1:11-12; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rev. 1:1.

The Sinless Christ

Jesus lived a perfect life on earth as the God-man incarnate. Oswald Sanders explains, *"He was undefiled, free from all moral impurity and defilement, he was separate-set apart permanently-from the sinners for whom he lived and died."*¹³

Scripture References: Heb. 4:15, 7:26, 9:14; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21.

The Trinity

Wayne Grudem defines the Trinity as God eternally existing in three persons, *"Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God."*¹⁴

Scripture References: Deut. 6:4; John 1:1-3, 3:5-8, 6:27, 20:28; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Peter 1:2.

Justification by Faith

Anthony Hoekma defines the term justification *"as that gracious and judicial (in the sense of legal) act of God whereby he declares believing sinners righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ which is credited to them."*¹⁵

Scripture References: Gen. 15:6; Deut. 25:1; Prov. 17:15; Rom. 4:3, 10:5-10; Gal. 2:15-16, 3:6.

The Return of Christ

The living and resurrected Jesus will return personally and physically to receive his church and establish his kingdom. He will also return to judge the world in righteousness.

Scripture Reference: Matt. 24:30; John 14:1-6; Acts 1:10-11, 3:19-21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Tim. 6:14-15; Rev. 22:20

¹² Paul Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 293.

¹³ Oswald J. Sanders, *The Incomparable Christ: The Person and Work of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 82.

¹⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 1996), 226.

¹⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 172.

Have the participants read the “We Are” statements on their own (*Refer to “We Are” handout*):

Emmanuel International Church’s “WE ARE” Statement of Faith:

WE ARE A PEOPLE FORMED DECISIVELY BY THE PAST

From before the creation of the world, God the Father chose us and loved us in his Son. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, who steps into history and shares in our humanity. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit while his mother, Mary, was still a virgin. As the Son of God, Jesus came to make God known. As the Servant of God, Jesus came to undo the corruption of humanity and the divine curse on creation caused by the first man, Adam. He came to liberate us from our devastating self-love and to rescue us from the consequences of our ongoing willful refusal to love God and others. Jesus fulfilled the promises made by God to Israel and realized all that Israel was called, but failed, to be. He gave us a glimpse of the world to come, calling the people of God to follow him and to demonstrate the goodness of his rule by their shared lives.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus lived the life Adam and the rest of humanity could not live. And through the Holy Spirit, Jesus died the death that Adam and the rest of humanity deserve to die. On the cross he endured and exhausted God’s righteous anger against our rebellion, paying its penalty in full. Jesus rose physically from the dead, proving the effectiveness of his death. His resurrection is the promise and beginning of God’s new world. Jesus then returns to his Father in heaven, from where he now rules over all creation. He sent his Spirit to apply all that he achieved on the cross. The Spirit now equips us as God’s people to live for Christ and speak of him, so that others might submit to his gracious reign. In this way, Jesus sovereignly gathers his church as he rescues those the Father has given him.

WE ARE A PEOPLE LIVING JOYFULLY IN THE PRESENT

God has given his Spirit and word to his people to equip us to serve him in the world and to bring us to his future.

God the Holy Spirit is the giver of life, the one who convicts of sin and the creator of saving faith. He is the one who opens our eyes to see the beauty of Christ so that through the Spirit we willingly embrace God’s grace. He is the one who gives us new hearts to turn to Christ and trust him. The Spirit sets us apart for Christ and makes us more like him through the word of God.

The Holy Spirit is the author and interpreter of the Bible, which is God’s word to his world concerning his Son, Jesus Christ. While the Bible reflects the characters and circumstances of the people who wrote it, the Holy Spirit so superintended the writing process that the words written by human authors were the exact words God intended for them to write. So the Bible is a completely true and reliably witness to God and his plan of redemption. Because it is the word of God, the Bible is the final authority in matters of conduct, questions of life, and issues of truth.

Under the word of God, we live together in union with Christ as his church. God is presently littering the world with local expressions of this church. As the church, we celebrate our cultural diversity while enjoying our unity in Christ. Gospel-believing churches act as outposts of God’s Kingdom and as a means of grace to a needy and dying world. God has given us the task of making the good news of Jesus known to those without God and without hope in the world. Our community life ought to give others a foretaste of what God has in store for his world. So, by word and life, we model and offer reconciliation to those alienated from God by their willful rejection of him. We call people to turn from despising God and urge them to trust in Christ. Without Christ, people face only the judgment of being forever cut off from God and all that is good. It is by grace that we live in the present as forgiven sinners and eagerly look forward to a future in the presence of our Jesus, our savior.

As those welcomed, forgiven and accepted, we become a community of those who welcome, forgive and accept. We respond to the gospel in baptism, expressing that we have become part of the people of God. The Lord’s Supper is the meal we regularly share

together to celebrate the work of Christ and express that we have been joined together in the family of God. Our shared life proclaims the Lord's death until he returns to make good the invitation to his eternal banquet.

WE ARE A PEOPLE LONGING EAGERLY FOR THE FUTURE

We are waiting for the arrival of a new heaven and earth, which God will bring about through his transforming power. A day is coming when Christ will come again to establish his reign of justice and freedom. He will create the home we were made for—from which sin, Satan, and death will be banished forever.

In renewed bodies in a renewed creation, we will live as God's people in unbroken relationship with God and with each other. At the center of everything will be the one God, eternally self-existing as God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the presence of our creator and redeemer, we will find life as it is meant to be—full and satisfying—as we live out the purpose for which we have been made: knowing God and enjoying him forever.

Let's take a moment to look at the church discipline policy (*Refer to "Church Authority" handout*):

Church Authority¹⁶

What authority does Christ give the local church and why?

1. In this fallen world, hypocrites and heretics confuse the world about the gospel and the nature of Christ's love. Therefore, Christ authorizes the church to mark off the people of God.
2. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus demonstrates concern over who is identified with his name and who is not, because identifying with him is identifying with the heavenly Father.
3. In Matthew 16, 18, and 28, Jesus gave the apostles and the apostolic church the power of the keys. This authorized the church to guard the gospel, to affirm credible professions, to unite such professors to itself, to oversee their discipleship, and to exclude hypocrites.
4. Even with all its imperfections, the church represents Jesus on earth. It gives witness to his coming salvation and judgment.
5. The church, therefore, is Christ's proxy on earth.
6. The fact that the church is Christ's proxy on earth means that the Christian must submit to the church on earth, which means submitting to the local church.
7. How then can we formally define local church membership and discipline? As the forming or breaking of a covenant between a Christian and a church.
8. This covenant between a Christian and a local church does not remove a Christian's responsibilities to other Christians, but it does give a Christian more responsibility over the members of his or her church.

Main Answers: Christ authorizes the local church to proclaim and protect the gospel, to recognize or affirm those who belong to him, to unite them to itself, to oversee their discipleship, and to exclude any imposters. He gives the local church this authority in

¹⁶ Jonathan Leeman, *The Church and the Surprising Offense of God's Love* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 359.

order to protect and display his gospel in a fallen world which continually misunderstands and misportrays his gospel love.

Members of EIC believe that Jesus knows best how to safeguard the spiritual wellbeing and witness of his church. Following his instructions in the Scripture, therefore, must be what is best for all our members. Jesus told us how to safeguard the church from sin and error in Matthew 18:15-17.

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

At Emmanuel International Church, we endeavor to follow Jesus which includes following his instructions on church discipline. Members freely (and gladly!) consent to this process of church discipline, recognizing that Jesus intends it for the good of our souls and the care of his church. Therefore, we follow Jesus’ process for confronting sin and seeking repentance outlined in the Scripture above. In cases where repentance is not forthcoming, the process then grows to involve the larger church. Excommunication is the last resort of a church in addressing unrepentant sin, and it is always intended to be redemptive and restorative. The hope is that the excommunicated will come to their senses, repent, and be restored to the church. While under consideration for church discipline, a member may not withdraw his or her membership. Members of EIC welcome and consent to this process as part of signing the EIC Affirmations.

Take time for Q and A.

IV. “Believing the Gospel”

Believing the gospel unites us with others who also affirm the gospel. Briefly discuss the gospel partnerships we have with IBC and La Federation Baptiste in France.

We are members of the International Baptist Convention (IBC)- a fellowship of 64 churches in 24 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Central and South America. The mission of the IBC is to mobilize and multiply disciple-making churches, reaching people from around the globe for Christ.

IBC Core Values¹⁷

- We value **Fellowship**. We believe that community among Christ-followers facilitates encouragement, prayer, edification, and accountability. We believe that Christian friendships develop when we take the time and effort to share our joys, sorrows, and challenges. (1 Thess. 5:14, Gal. 6:2)
- We value **Partnership**. We believe that working together with other churches to reach common goals enriches churches. Every church has something to offer. We also believe in connecting with other Christ-following groups. We can achieve more in this way than working independently of one another. We believe that cooperation is a gift of God. (Phil. 1:3-11, Eccl. 4:9)
- We value **Healthy Churches**. Because we believe that the local church is God’s primary means of presenting the Gospel and establishing His kingdom, we will

¹⁷ International Baptist Convention, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://ibc-churches.org/core-values/>.

- seek to help churches achieve their unique, disciple-making mission in relevant and effective ways. (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Thess. 1:2-10)
- We value **Church Planting**. We believe that every church should be involved in some way in helping to start new congregations. We desire to expand our reach to strategic places around the world where the Gospel is needed. (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18-20)
 - We value **Diversity**. Since Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations, we celebrate that people from many nations and cultures come together in our churches. We believe that our diversity expresses the creativity and eternal plan of God. (Gen. 12:3, Rev. 7:9-10)
 - We value **Unity**. The unity of the Spirit among our churches exhibits the oneness of all believers in Christ. We will seek to work out differences that may arise because we believe the power of the Gospel to unite us is stronger than the power of our enemy to divide us. (John 17:20-23, Eph. 2:19-22)

We are also in partnership with La Fédération Baptiste in France (for more information, go to www.federation.feebf.com).

Because we affirm the gospel, we desire fellowship with others who affirm the gospel. Find the handout titled “Weekly Rhythms”. What role can you play in the weekly rhythms of the church?

V. “Loving the City”

If we believe the gospel, we naturally want to advance the gospel, in love, to our neighbors. Refer to “*Outreach Opportunities*” handout.

Members of Emmanuel International Church are committed to reaching our neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is always easier when partnered with a fellow believer. Feel free to participate in any of the current outreach events below:

- Evangelistic Adventures Together @ Around Paris
- English Bible Study @ Ecole Polytechnique
- English Conversation Group @ Voisins-Le-Bretonneux
- Games Evening Outreach @ Rueil
- English Bible Study @ Rueil
- Annual Thanksgiving Outreach @ Voisins-Le-Bretonneux
- Piano Concerts @ Various locations

Break (15 min)

Lesson 4

Explanation of Leadership structure and Responsibilities of Members (40 min)

Objective: Potential members will understand the leadership structure of EIC, associate membership, the meaning and purpose of a church covenant, and the necessity of biblical stewardship.

Led by KJ

He will talk quickly about leadership structure. But he will mainly focus on Distinctives like Parker does in Rueil's membership course: Christian-->Protestant-->Evangelical-->Baptist. He will also address associate membership for those who aren't convictionally Baptist. And he will walk us through the 3 tiers of theology, so that we know where there is freedom for disagreement.

Led by Ryan

As KJ explained in our church membership series a few months ago, on observation we can make from Ephesians 5 verse 22. The source of this covenant relationship in marriage is Christ: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Our covenant relationship of love and reverence for Christ is the SOURCE of our covenant relationship with one another. If you don't have the one, you won't have the other. If you don't have a relationship of love and reverence for Christ, you won't have that kind of relationship with the Church -- His Bride. If your love and reverence for Christ is weak, Guess what? Your love and reverence for the Church will also be weak. But, there is good news in this. Incredibly good news! These two covenant relationships are bound together, and God designed that for your good. Jesus designed that our hearts would grow to love and revere Him more as we immerse ourselves in the life of the Church. So that, pursuing a covenant relationship with the church is part of God's means to grow your covenant relationship with Jesus. Membership at EIC Ternes requires an affirmation of this belief and a commitment in this endeavor. Our church covenant communicates that we are not in a consumer relationship but Being **in covenant** with the Bridegroom means **living in covenant** with the Bride.

Please take a few minutes to review our church covenant (*Refer to "Church Covenant" handout*). After you read, we will answer any questions you might have in regard to its content.

Emmanuel International Church Membership Covenant

As a member:

- I affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ and will seek gospel unity in the midst of the cultural diversity found in an international church.
- In affirming the gospel, I desire to walk in step with its implications for my life. This includes praying regularly for fellow members, practicing hospitality, forgiving those that have offended me, and embracing a gospel generosity in resources and conflicts.
- I recognize in order to be a full member of EIC that I must have publicly identified myself with Jesus through baptism as a believer. (EIC does offer Associate Membership to those who hold a different view of baptism, but only if it is a thoughtful and deeply held conviction.)
- Because I recognize the local church as a vital part of my spiritual growth, I will endeavor to participate in the weekly gatherings, pray for leaders of the flock, and welcome the pastoral oversight of church leadership.
- Because I am committed to growing to full maturity in Christ, I will invite others into my life and come alongside others to help them achieve this goal as well. I

will endeavor to grow in my discipleship by increasingly giving sacrificially, serving selflessly, ministering purposefully, and evangelizing lovingly alongside my church family.

The Church covenants with you:

- To be a worker with you for your joy in Jesus and your growth in the gospel.
- To be a safe place to be yourself and share your burdens with those who will care and pray for you.
- To welcome you in a way that reflects Jesus' welcome, and to shepherd you in a way that reflects the tenderness of the Good Shepherd.
- To spur you on to love and good deeds, coming alongside and encouraging to embrace God's mission in our life together.
- To pursue you in love if straying from the gospel and not to accept a withdrawal from this covenant relationship while issues remain unresolved.
- To send you off well into another church's care if/when God moves you away from our church family in Paris.

Part of having a spiritually healthy culture will always include an element of gospel generosity. As a church, we want to be generous in a way that reflects God's generosity to us in Christ. While members of EIC will often have vastly different amounts of resources at their disposal, all members are expected to contribute gladly and generously toward the needs of the family. This expectation is both for the advance of gospel ministry in Paris and for the individual's own personal growth in discipleship.

The preferred way for members to give to the church is through standing orders with a bank. Find the handout titled "EIC Bank Statement". Contributing to the church in this way makes giving something calculated and prayed over in advance. Additionally, giving this way allows us to give you an end-of-year donation statement. With this statement you can currently claim back 66% of your giving on your French taxes. (So, if you intend to give 100€, you can actually give 300€ because you'll receive 200€ back in your taxes.)

Automatic Transfer Form

A, le

Objet: Demande de mise en place de virement bancaire automatique

Monsieur le Directeur d'agence,

Par la présente, je vous demande de bien vouloir effectuer depuis mon compte courant

N° un virement bancaire mensuel, le

(date) de chaque mois à compter du (date), au profit du bénéficiaire suivant :

Emmanuel International Church

IBAN : FR76 1027 8060 8100 0209 4594 168

BIC : CMCIFR2A

Montant : Euros

Libellé de l'opération : [Your Name] Dons pour EIC Ternes

Je vous remercie de bien vouloir m'adresser l'ordre de virement dès que l'opération aura été effectuée.

Vous remerciant de votre diligence.

Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur le Directeur d'agence, en l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

Signature

Place, date

Subject: Request to set up an automatic bank transfer

Dear Bank Manager,

I kindly request that you set up from my current account (account #

.....

a monthly bank transfer, on the (day) of each month beginning

..... (date), for the following beneficiary:

Emmanuel International Church

IBAN : FR76 1027 8060 8100 0209 4594 168

BIC : CMCIFR2A

Amount: Euros

Operation Name: [Your Name] Donations for EIC Ternes

I would be grateful if you will confirm with me once this transaction is put into effect.

Thank you again for your help.

Politely,

Name

Signature

Lesson 5

EIC's Child Protection Policy (20 min)

Objective: Potential members will be able to communicate the necessity of a child protection plan and understand key components of the policy.

Led by Dana

Emmanuel International Church gathers each Sunday in multiple locations around Paris and also has various smaller, informal gatherings during the week. At present, children are accompanied by their parents, but this may not always be the case. The leadership recognizes the need to be vigilant and to maintain good safeguarding practice, even when parents are present.

To this end, we will adhere throughout to the guidelines of this Child Protection Policy, which apply to everyone attending our corporate gatherings and to children's workers during our age-appropriate teaching times for children. Please find the handout titled "Child Protection Policy".

Youth

Emmanuel International Church of Ternes asserts parents as the primary disciplinarian in a child's life. Our philosophy of family ministry is to equip and encourage parents to lead and build up their child in the faith. A family-equipping model of family ministry means that many church events will include all age groups. We are committed to being the family of God and working together to ensure that every parent is supported in their goal to raise their child in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4)

Young Children

As Jesus warmly welcomed little children, we want to do the same. We want children to feel both welcome and safe within our church community. To this end, all members of Emmanuel International Church must understand and follow our Child Protection Policy to ensure the safety of our children and the future witness of our church. The Safeguarding Guidelines found in this handbook, and the membership course, will include a thorough review of the policy before candidate members affirm that they will abide by it.

Child Protection Policy

Emmanuel International Church gathers each Sunday in multiple locations around Paris and also has various smaller, informal gatherings during the week. At present, children are accompanied by their parents, but this may not always be the case. The leadership recognizes the need to be vigilant and to maintain good safeguarding practice, even when parents are present.

To this end, we will adhere throughout to the guidelines of this Child Protection Policy, which apply to everyone attending our corporate gatherings and to children's workers during our age-appropriate teaching times for children.

1. An adult should never be left alone with a child while at an official church event. Where confidentiality is important (e.g. in counseling) and a child wishes to speak privately, then ensure that another adult knows the interview is taking place. Even when out of earshot, another adult must always remain within line of sight. Best practice would say that the other adult observing the situation should not be one's spouse or family member.

Bottom line: Never should there be 1:1 situation without oversight from multiple adults. If you see this situation developing, you should take immediate steps to correct it.

2. Take care of touching:

- Keep all physical contact public and within full view of others.

- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the worker.
 - All children are entitled to personal privacy and the right to decide how much physical contact they have with others, except in circumstances such as a medical emergency.
 - When giving first aid (or applying sun screen, etc.), encourage the child to do what they can themselves while, in their best interests, giving appropriate help where necessary.
 - Workers should monitor one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued.
 - Concerns should always be reported to the Safeguarding Coordinator (Dana Powell at EIC Ternes).
3. No person under 18 years of age should be left in charge of any children of any age, and such helpers will be responsible to a named worker.
 4. Children should not be left alone during church events.
 5. A LOG BOOK will be kept at each EIC church in which workers can record unusual events with each leader recording what they witnessed together with the date. Log books are designed to protect both children and workers from future accusations. It is suggested that workers also record in the log book incidents (such as disruptions or fights) and what action was taken by the group leaders. Because accusations of abuse can be made many years later, records should be kept for as long as possible.
 6. An ACCIDENT BOOK will also be kept which parents (and older children) should be asked to sign.
 7. If a child discloses that he or she is being abused or a worker suspects abuse, all concerns should be reported as soon as possible directly to the Safeguarding Coordinator (Dana Powell at EIC Ternes), and under no circumstances should workers carry out their own investigations. If the Coordinator is unavailable (or is part of the concern), a report should be made to the Safeguarding Deputy (Abby Helms at EIC Ternes).
 8. If a worker has safeguarding concerns about another worker, follow the same procedure in reporting outlined in point 7.

In addition to this:

1. We will ask parents of children attending Sunday meetings without their parents to fill in our Parental Consent Form. Copies of this form should be kept with the Log Book.
2. Only a child's parent or a pre-designated "toilet helper" may assist a child in the use of the toilet. You should alert another adult that you are assisting a child and ensure that the adult is within earshot if you are outside their line of sight.
3. All EIC members will review and sign this policy as part of their membership process. Only members in good standing will be acceptable workers to recruit for working with children at official gatherings of the church.
4. To protect the health and safety of all involved, children and adults should not be allowed around other children if they have vomited in the past 48 hours or had an elevated temperature in the past 24 hours minimum.

Lesson 6

Next Steps (15 min)

Objective: Potential members will demonstrate a knowledge gained from the course and will be given the opportunity to ask questions for clarification.

Led by pastoral staff

- Complete evaluation survey
- Explanation of pastoral membership interview
- Q and A

KJ: Final words/prayer

APPENDIX 6

COMPONENTS OF MEMBERSHIP RESULTS

Components of Membership Course Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the course is biblically and theologically sound.					
Parker				x	
KJ				x	
Paul				x	
The course is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.					
Parker			x		
KJ		x			Lessons are too long.
Paul		x			Would change the terminology for better communication.
Methodology					
The course sufficiently addresses the unique dynamics of an international audience.					
Parker		x			Needs the vision of the church and an introduction to our partnerships with the IBC and French associations.
KJ		x			Too much of an emphasis on intercultural competencies. Would be better as an optional handout.
Paul			x		
The course makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role play and homework.					
Parker		x			Seems like the emphasis is more lecture focused as opposed to a discussion.
KJ		x			Would prefer more of a discussion as opposed to a lecture.
Paul			x		

Scope					
The course meets the goals and objectives of the EIC.					
Parker			x		Yes, if the EIC vision and mission is included.
KJ			x		It exceeds the goals and objectives and should be scaled down a bit.
Paul				x	
The course meets the constraints of a transient population.					
Parker				x	
KJ			x		Must include child protection plan.
Paul				x	

APPENDIX 7

REVISED COMPONENTS OF MEMBERSHIP RESULTS

Components of Membership Course Evaluation					
1 = insufficient; 2 = requires attention; 3 = sufficient; 4 = exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
Biblical Faithfulness					
The content of the course is biblically and theologically sound.					
Parker				x	
KJ				x	
Paul				x	
The course is presented at a level appropriate for most participants.					
Parker				x	
KJ			x		
Paul			x		
Methodology					
The course sufficiently addresses the unique dynamics of an international audience.					
Parker				x	
KJ				x	
Paul			x		
The course makes use of various learning approaches such as lecture, case studies, role play and homework.					
Parker				x	
KJ			x		
Paul			x		
Scope					
The course meets the goals and objectives of the EIC.					
Parker				x	
KJ				x	
Paul				x	

The course meets the constraints of a transient population.					
Parker				x	
KJ				x	
Paul				x	

APPENDIX 8

SERMON SERIES MANUSCRIPTS

“Covenant Relationships” by K.J. Pugh (Sermon 1 of 4)

October is the month we’ve set aside here at EIC Ternes to talk about church membership. We’re a new church plant, (if you didn’t know). Some of us are still members at our mother church in Rueil. But most of us are not. Now, it’s time for this church to grow up a little more, and establish what membership means HERE at EIC Ternes. So, we want to begin our thinking about church membership by looking at "Covenant Relationships" in the Scripture.

Q: What is a covenant relationship?

Q: How is it different from other relationships we have in life?

Q: How should being a member of a church differ from being a member of a club?

Q: Or a member of Costco?

Ephesians chapter 5 answers those questions for us. The forming of a new family (husband+wife) reflects the "covenant relationship" God designed for Christ and His Church. Your relationship with your spouse, and your relationship with your church is designed by God to be different than other relationships in our lives. And Ephesians 5 makes tells us why that is. Now, if you’ve encountered this passage before -- (and you often do at Christian weddings) --

The focus has probably always been on the husband-and-wife relationship.

And rightly so. It’s to husbands and wives that Paul is applying the idea of a covenant relationship here. So, the focus is normally on the covenant relationships we create in marriage and what they should look like. But for our purposes, I want to focus on the other covenant relationship in this passage -- The one that involves Christ and the Church. This is the real substance, of which marriage is the reflection. So, I’m going to preach the passage differently than I ever have before. There will obviously be applications here for husbands and wives, but it won’t be the focus this afternoon.

Illust: Because human marriage is really like the moon -- The moon is a reflection of the sun’s light. The covenant relationship of Christ and His Church is the blazing center, And the best marriages are but a moon-like reflection of that covenant relationship.

So, first let me define our terms, so that there is no confusion.

Q: What is a "covenant relationship"?

Let me first define it by what it’s not. A covenant relationship is NOT a consumer relationship.

Now, we all have many consumer relationships in our lives. They often include these long, small print agreements that we agree to without bothering to read. I get my mobile phone service from FREE Mobile. And I have a consumer relationship with them. I didn’t read a word of the contract I signed, But I know that I give them the 20 euros a month that they want and in exchange they give me the phone service I need (though perhaps not the phone coverage I want). That’s a consumer relationship. If ever FREE stops providing what I want, I sever the relationship and go looking for another phone

service provider. I also have a consumer relationship with Costco. I pay money to be a member of Costco, which gives me the privilege to give them more money to buy food in bulk. (And we love Costco! We eat for 2 euros a piece when we're there!) And we've been known to evangelize for Costco, bringing other people along with us.

Q: Why?

Because they've got the products we want. But, if they ever stopped doing that, Or the distance starting feeling too far, Or if being a part of other things started feeling more important. We would drop our membership.

Q: Why?

Because we have a consumer relationship with Costco. The trouble is that many people have a consumer relationship with the church. Church is merely a meeting they attend because it has the product they want. But if they ever lose interest, Or the cost feels too great, Or another church starts offering a better product, Then they're off.

Q: Why?

Because they had a consumer relationship with the church. They viewed the church as a product they consumed. Instead of a people to whom they belonged. Now, Ephesians 5 reveals to us something shockingly and refreshingly different. The Church is a family -- The Church is a bride, who enters into a covenant relationship with Jesus, and, as a consequence, with one another. Because you can't have a covenant relationship with Christ and have a consumer relationship with the Church. You can't be united to the Bridegroom, and divorced from the Bride. Being called into a covenant relationship with Christ is a call into a covenant relationship with the Church.

Let's begin to see this as we look at our passage: Verse 21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Two observations about this verse, (which you can easily make yourself):

1st) "Submitting to one another" is NOT part of a consumer relationship. It's actually quite the opposite. If something crosses my will in a consumer relationship and I don't like it, "I'm out!" I go looking elsewhere. But that's NOT the way it is in a covenant relationship. In a covenant relationship, I'm voluntarily laying down some of my rights, so that I might gain something more. This relationship that we're meant to have with one another, in the church, is not a consumer relationship. It's a covenant relationship, where we lovingly lay down our rights for the good of one another.

Here is another observation from verse 22. Notice the source of this covenant relationship: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Our covenant relationship of love and reverence for Christ is the SOURCE of our covenant relationship with one another. If you don't have the one, you won't have the other. If you don't have a relationship of love and reverence for Christ, you won't have that kind of relationship with the Church -- His Bride. If your love and reverence for Christ is weak, Guess what? Your love and reverence for the Church will also be weak. But, there is good news in this. Incredibly good news! These two covenant relationships are bound together, and God designed that for your good.

Q: Can you see why it's so good?

If you want to grow your love and desire to lay down your rights for the Church, God forces you to go the Source -- cultivate your love and reverence for Jesus.

Q: What better thing could God force you to do than to grow in your love for the One who is most lovely?! As your heart falls more in love and more deeply reveres the One who laid aside His rights for the Church, Guess what happens? You start doing the same. You start loving the Church like Jesus loves it. You increasingly commit yourself to serve what Jesus wholeheartedly committed Himself to save. And, the good news gets better, Because growth here is actually circular.

Q: Want to grow your love and reverence for Jesus, so that you might love His Church more?

Jesus designed that our hearts would grow to love and revere Him more as we immerse ourselves in the life of the Church. So that, pursuing a covenant relationship with the church is part of God's means to grow your covenant relationship with Jesus. You probably know this already by experience.

Q: At what points in your life has Jesus felt most distant and your love for Him the most faint?

Hasn't it been at times when you were most divorced from the affection-feeding life of the church?

Q: Or at what points did you grow the most in your faith and love for Jesus?

Hasn't that growth ALL been connected back to covenant relationships with God's people?

God designed it that way, Because the relationship between Christ and His Church (and the relationship between Husband and Wife), are covenant relationships. And God intends the lesser to be a reflection of the greater. The temporary covenant to be a reflection of the eternal one. Therefore, Marriage isn't a consumer relationship, (the Scripture is about to tell us).

Although so many people enter into like it is. They enter into marriage for what they can get out of it, Not thinking at all about what rights they will be required to lay down.

Whenever you have two people who enter into marriage so keenly aware of what the other person owes them, and so little aware of what they owe the other person, You've got a recipe for disaster and conflict. Why? Because that's not God's design for marriage. Marriage is designed to reflect the covenant relationship God always intended to have with His people.

Look at verse 23-24

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." Now, I'm going to say next to nothing directly to wives (or to husband). Because again, that relationship is the shadow. The substance casting the shadow is the covenant relationship between Christ and His Church. So, focus on what this says about the Church. Christ relates to the Church, like a head does to its body. As a church, we are "the body of Christ." A body has many parts, Many members, Many functions All of them important. Every part is painful to lose. Every member has a function that supports the whole. But severed from the its head, the body dies. You will die, severed from Christ. But also if we cut off our life from the life the body, we will spiritually wither and die. Like a finger that's been severed and never reattached It just makes sense, even young kids can understand this: Kids, if a consumer relationship is like a lego figure -- You can mix and match. "Don't like those trousers ... another color. "Don't like that head ..." If a consumer relationship is like a lego figurine, Then a covenant relationship is like the unity and interdependence of the human body. Try telling your legs that you don't like them anymore. Try telling your head, you'd rather switch it for another one. It doesn't work that way.

Q: How does it work, then?

Covenant relationships work through laying down our rights, so that we might take up new ones. In marriage we lay down our independence, so that we might gain relational intimacy and the security of a life-long love. Laying down your rights is an act of submission. Which to the world, carries all kinds of negative connotations. But the world doesn't understand submission the way the Bible does. The way Jesus does. Jesus glorifies submission as He Himself submits to the will of His Father. Jesus lays aside His rights as the Creator, so that He might save His Creation. Without Jesus submitting to the Cross, There is no salvation for any us. Therefore, without submission. There is no

salvation. In this way, (and many others) Jesus exalts the concept of submission -- "The first shall be last . . . " "The greatest . . . " And this is great news! The One who calls us to submit to one another is the Most High King who submitted himself to save His people. "The Son of Man can not to be served . . . " "If I, the Lord and Master, serve you . . ."

We function best as Christ's body when we lay down our rights to do His will. Because to submitting to His will is BETTER than maintaining our rights! Because His will is good, And holding fast to our rights always leads us to places we don't want to go. Proverbs, "There is a way that seems right . . ."

Q: So, what is the alternative?

Q: What does Christ offer us in a covenant relationship?

Verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Christ's covenant relationship with us is one of self-sacrificing love. This stands in stark contrast to consumer relationships. Consumer relationships may pretend to be relationships of love, But they are actually characterized by self-gratifying, not self-sacrificing. Once you no longer meet the need, Once you no longer perform, Once you no longer make them happy, the relationship is severed, and they're off looking for another. Jesus, however, needs nothing from us. And yet, He willingly sacrifices everything for us. Therefore, His covenant commitment isn't based on the strength of performance, but on the power of His love. A love that is self-sacrificing and which beautifies His Beloved:

Verse 26-27,

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Jesus loves us with a love that makes us more beautiful than we would ever be on our own. He removes our every stain, and wrinkle, and blemish as He washes us with the water of the Word. Ultimately, He will present us radiant and holy, Better than the best bride you've ever seen, With more mirth than the best wedding you've ever been to. That Day will come, But even now, in these days, Jesus is making His Bride more beautiful.

Q: How?

Q: Do you see it?

A: By washing them with the water of the Word.

Q: Now, where does that happen?

Yes, it can happen privately as we take up God's Word and have our hearts convicted and our consciences washed clean in a time of private devotion. But, Paul is speaking this to the church, NOT a bunch of random individuals doing their own thing. The primary place where God washes us with the clean water of the His Word is here --in the Church. The Church family is central to God's plan to make us more like Christ --to beautify us as His Bride. Right now, is one of those times. And this should amaze us. God would have us washed and made more beautiful in the regular act of hearing His Word --

By regularly hearing Christ exalted through His Word. As the His Word is open now, Look AT this Jesus, and see how He loves and serves you! And as we do this together, repeatedly and regularly, We're changed. We're washed and made more beautiful. We're reshaped a little more into His image, reflecting Jesus to the world, just a little bit better. But we have to be washed by our hearts believing His Word.

Hear this Word now, and believe in how much Jesus loves you:

Verses 28-30, "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but

he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- 30 for we are members of his body." Now, you might read that Jesus "feeds" and "cares" for His body and think He does it begrudgingly. Perhaps because you begrudgingly spend money and time on feeding and caring for your body.[Scholar in the Canterbury Tales -- "rather buy books than eat."] But here is a better translation of verse 29 that really gets to the heart of it: "for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church."

Q: How does Jesus care for His Church?

He nourishes it. Not begrudgingly, but tenderly.

Q: How does Jesus feel about His Church?

He cherishes it.

Illust: Imagine for a moment that the Spanish explores really did discover "a fountain of youth" in the New World. Imagine old, wrinkly and broken bodies crawling into that fountain and emerging again young and beautiful. Pure, unblemished skin. Better than the models on the billboards around the Galleries Lafayette. Imagine how much that fountain would be cherished, Imagine how fiercely it would be fought for. Church, you are cherished MORE by Christ. For you, Jesus will fight MORE fiercely. You are His Bride, dearly bought --Purchased with blood of greater value than a fountain of youth. Because this blood grants eternal life to ALL those who are washed in it. This blood doesn't just wash away our brokenness-- It washes away our sin. It satisfies the wrath of God by absorbing all the punishment due us. This shows how highly you are prized. This shows how much you are cherished. Feel that, this afternoon! You are cherished by Jesus. If you feel that, and feel it deeply, it will make you cherish the church as well. Christ nourishes the church like it was His flesh.

Q: And don't we care more tenderly for those parts of our body that are wounded?

Q: Don't we gently nourish back to health those parts which are hurt?

The same is true of our Savior. The Scripture says, "A bruised reed He will not break . . . "Jesus cherishes your faith, even if it feels small and close to its breaking point. And He wants to nourish you. But nourishment always comes through being connected to His Body, the Church.

As I've already said, during the month of October we're going to be calling people into a covenant relationship with Jesus' church here at EIC Ternes. Next month, November, is when we want people to respond to that call and let us know your desire to become a covenant member here during your time in Paris. Some people are already responding to that call. I had two people tell me last week that they wanted to commit to be a part of God's people here. You can respond and tell me the same thing today. "I want to become a covenant member of this church family." There will be a process for that, and we will be outlining it in the weeks to come. Ryan is working on a membership class that we hope to start at the beginning of the new year. But you'll know exactly what you're getting into. Maybe. Hopefully, as you commit yourself to a church family. God will do exceeding and abundantly MORE than you could ask or imagine. God calls you into a covenant of love with His Son, And that means you're also called into a covenant relationship with Jesus' Church --His Bride His Body. Let's say "the yes" in our hearts now, as we respond in prayer to His call.

“Growing Up Together” by K.J. Pugh (Sermon 2 of 4)

Q: Have you ever tried to put something together **without looking** at the instructions?

Q: Kids, have you ever tried to build a **big Lego set** by just looking at the picture on the box?

Q: Adults, have you ever tried to assemble a piece of IKEA furniture **without looking at the design** in the instructions?

"Oh, I've got this." "I know **exactly what** this thing ought to look like, and I can put it together **without the instructions.**" We lived the first four years of our marriage with a piece of particle board **upside down** on our wooden entertainment center, **because I thought** that I knew what I was doing. I **didn't bother** to follow the original design. **I thought I knew** how all the pieces fit together. **But I didn't know** how to put things together **as well as the designers did.** And when I finished and turned it right side up, I realized that I had put a piece in upside down, **with no undoing my mistake. What is true** in building Lego sets and IKEA furniture **is true in life as well.** We **assume** that we **already have a good idea** of how life ought to work. **But** we're **naturally prone** to getting wrong-- to getting things **upside down.** Because we **often don't** realize (or give any thought) that **there is a Designer.**

Like the Lego set or piece of IKEA furniture, **Life has a Designer.** And **He knows what's best.** He knows best **how life works,** and how all the pieces fit together. **The Designer knows best** how human relationships work and the place they're meant to have in our lives.

We saw this last week in Ephesians chapter 5. In the beginning, God wove "covenant relationships" into **the fabric of human life,** by giving us marriage. Marriage is a **part of God's good creation** -- Pre-dating the Fall, sin, and our rebellion against God. And God **designed** marriage **to reflect** something greater: Marriage is meant **to reflect** the covenant relationship that God **always intended** to have with His people -- The covenant relationship that **Jesus has always intended to have with the Church.**

But for the most part, **people don't see this.** We **don't look** at the original design and instructions. **Most people don't even know there are instructions -- That there is a design!** We wrongly assume that **covenant relationships** look no different from **consumer relationships**-- A relationship that I enter into **in order to get the thing I want.** And so we **use people** like they were products. We **manipulate others** to perform the way we want them to -- to serve our desires. **Never thinking** what this relationship ought to require me. **What rights** a covenant relationship will require me to lay down for the other person.

Illust: And so we're **often putting the pieces in upside down,** and our relationships **suffer** because of it. **BUT** the book of Ephesians **describes a better way.** It tells us of **the Maker's original design.**

We saw last week in Ephesians 5, some of **God's design for Covenant Relationships.** We saw that these are relationships **characterized by submission** -- a laying down of our right in order to embrace much greater realities. These relationships involve **a special type of love** -- A love that is **self-sacrificing.** A love that makes the object of the love **more beautiful,** A

love that is **unconditional** and **secure**, A love that **nourishes** and **cherishes** its Beloved. **This is the kind** of love (and covenant relationship) that exist between Christ and His Church. (of which, human marriage is meant to be a shadow and a reflection.)

This is the kind of covenant relationship and love that **you** are meant to have in your life, **Whether or not** you ever get married. You are meant to have this kind of covenant relationship with Christ **AND** with His Church. Because **as Christ has loved you**, You're **called** to love the Church, His Bride. As Christ bears your burdens, **You're called** to bear one another's burdens in new family He creates. As you submit to Christ, **You're called to submit to one another**

out of reverence for Jesus. Entering into a covenant relationship with Christ **means entering into a covenant relationship** with His Church. You **CAN'T** have a **covenant relationship** with Christ and a **consumer relationship** with the Church. (Or at least you **ought not**. You can see **how contrary it is** to God's design -- Like putting together that piece of furniture with parts that are **upside down**.)

If you have a covenant relationship with Christ, you **ought to have** a covenant relationship with the Church as well. Being **in covenant** with the Bridegroom means **living in covenant** with the Bride. Last week we focused on **what** a Covenant Relationship with **Christ's Bride** (the church) should look like. If last week, we focused on "**the what**." Then this week, we want to focus on "**the why**."

Q: Why should you **WANT** a covenant relationship with the Church?

Q: Why should you want to enter into a covenant relationship with **THIS church**?

Q: Why is this relationship **for your good**, according to God's design?
We see the answers to those questions in Ephesians chapter 4.

Let's look at it again, Beginning in verse 11. "It was he [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." **Now**, these verses contain some **huge implications** for us:

First, we see that **Jesus gives gifts to His Church**. Verse 8 says the same thing (a bit more poetically), "This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and **gave gifts** to men.'" Jesus **gives gifts** to His Church. **All the gifts we're meant to have**, come for Jesus. All the gifts **the Church needs**, Jesus gives. **BUT** verse 11 **also implies**

that **no one member** of the church **will have all gifts**. "Jesus gives some **this** and some **that**. Some will have **this gift** as a pastor, and some **that gift** as a teacher." Jesus gives **all the gifts His Church will need**, **BUT** no one member of the Church has **all needed gifts**.

Therefore (**Application!**): **No matter how gifted you are, You STILL need the Church**. You **can ONLY have access** to all the gifts you need (**all the gifts Jesus gives**) through having a covenant relationship with the Church. **After all, What good is it** being a gifted teacher, **if you've got no one to teach?**

Q: What good is it having great pastoral gifts, **if you're not living in a covenant relationship** with people you can shepherd?

Q: What good is it being a gifted evangelist, **if you've got no church community** to welcome those people into?

The gifts Jesus gives **ONLY really workin a covenant relationship** with the Church. **And -- Here's really good news! --** Inside a covenant relationship with the Church, **You can trust God with how He has gifted you.**

If you look at verse 11 and say, "Jesus **hasn't given ME any of those gifts!**" That's okay, Because He **has given you** a covenant relationship **with a church** who has those **all those gifts** at work among them. Inside network of relationships that make up a local church, **the pressure is off!** Everyone is **free to be who God has gifted them to be.**

Q: Why?

Because you have **covenanted yourselves together** to be a church family. And in that family, **you now have access to all the gifts** God intended for the church to have. You can now **stop saying**, "Because I **don't** have that gift, **I'm not a valuable part** of the Church." "Because I'm a foot **and not an eye**, I'm not a valuable part of the Body." **No**, in the local Body of Christ, **Every part is needed. Every gift is needed.**

[**Illust:** Captain Planet -"powers combined"]

Now, there is a **valued place** even for the most **introverted** and **awkward** among us **to use their gifts --Everyone doesn't have to be an extraverted evangelist!**

Illust: When we function as a body, you may **not be the person** who is good at speaking to others about Jesus, But you might be that person who can introduce someone to Ryan, who is good at speaking about Jesus. You may **not** be the person who can **teach a lesson** or **host** a home group, **But** you ask a good question applying that lesson, Or help tidy up after that home group. When you are a covenant member of a Body, **You DON'T have to do all the work. You don't have to have ALL gifts.** You can be a **part of the whole. You can contribute** in a way that's true to how God made you, **as well as benefit** from how God has **made** and **gifted** other people **differently from you. Because the gifts we do have** are for this purpose -- verse 12:
"to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

Here we see a **common theme** in the New Testament: **Gifts are NOT for the benefit of the gifted** themselves, But for building up the Body of Christ. The gifts Jesus gives are **not for the personal advancement of the gifted**, but for the advancement and good of the Church. **And Jesus doesn't give gifts so that particularly gifted people might do all the work.**

Gifts are given **for the equipping all believers** to join Jesus in His work and mission.

Therefore, (we arrive again at the same conclusion), **Everyone needs the Church.** Those with the gifts listed in verse 11 **need the Church** Or else they have **no one to equip.** Their gifts **serve no purpose.** Those with gifts **not listed** in verse 11 **also need the Church.** The Church is God's design "to prepare them to do the work of gospel ministry." "to prepare God's people for works of service, **SO THAT** the body of Christ may be built up."

Notice **our common goal** in verse 12. "**so that** the Body of Christ might be built up."
Here is the goal that God has set before for each of us: **Build something that will last -- Building up the Body of Christ**, the Church. The design in God's instructions **isn't how to build a little Kingdom for yourself.** That's **too small** a thing. **Too temporary** at thing. **Instead**, God's design has us **building up the Church --** Something **eternal.** Something **bigger than ourselves. But you can't be a part** of building up something bigger than yourself, **unless you're in a covenant relationship** with a church family. You **don't get to participate** in the goal of verse 12 while living a life **divorced** from the

local church. And if this goal **wasn't clear and compelling enough** in verse 12, Paul restates it again. He states this goal **in a positive way** in verse 13, and again **in a negative way** in verse 14.

Here is the goal of building up the church **stated positively**: "so that the body of Christ may be built up (verse 13) **until we all reach unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God **and become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ." **Here is what it looks like to build up the church. Here is the goal** every Christian works for: Every Christian works for **unity of faith** (believing the same **gloriously true** things together) **AND** every Christian works for **maturity in Christlikeness** (living like Jesus would). **And if those** are the goals that God has set before you, **Guess what? You CAN'T accomplish those CUT OFF from the church.** You cannot work for unity of faith, **if you're NOT in a covenant relationship with a local community of faith.** You cannot reach maturity in Christ, **if your life is divorced from the life of Christ's body.**

(**Illust**: The severed hand **doesn't** mature and become more skillful. It just **withers** and **dies** cut off from the rest of body.)

Bottomline: You need the Church, **And the church needs you.** But lest you think, "Okay, **if I just throw myself into church life**, I'm sure it **won't take much time** to accomplish verse 13." "**It won't be long before** we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ." "**If I just commit myself for a season**, We'll get there. **We'll arrive.**" Let me tell you, **We won't.** Yes, this is our direction of travel, **But this is also a lifelong journey.** And we **won't arrive** at our journey's end until our King returns. This is why one of the cries of the Reformation was "*Sempre Reformanda*" -- "**Always Reforming**" **No church** arrives at perfection, **Until every church** stands together before the Throne of the One who is Perfect.

But for now, this is our direction of travel. We are traveling **toward** verse 13. **And** we are traveling **away from** verse 14. "Then we will **no longer** be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." **Growing up in our thoughts --- Not being tossed about by false beliefs** -- These things **don't happen in isolation. These things happen in community. These things happen** as the church community is built up by its members **speaking God's truth into our lives.** When we **don't have** others speaking truth into our lives, bad things happen. Heb 3, "Don't let there be found anyone of you an evil unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, But rather **encourage each other . . .**" [...perspective skewed...]

Paul **says the same thing** here in Ephesians.

God's design **to keep us from turning away from Him** is for us to be a part of a community **which lovingly speaks truth** and **daily encourages** one another. Verse 15, "**Instead, speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." **Contrary to the pressure** the world often puts on us, **Love speaks up.**

Love **doesn't silently let others go down a road** that will hurt them. **Love speaks. And Love speaks lovingly.** I think we've probably all been on the receiving end (**and the giving end**) of truth spoken **without love.** Where our **defenses went up.** Where the words **only wounded**, Where a truth spoken with love would have **brought healing.** We've all been there, **and probably will be there again.** It's **risky speaking up**, and **allowing others** to speak into your life. **But** when done with love,

THIS is how we grow: Verse 15, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, **we WILL in all things grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." This is **such a simple, but**

essential truth: **We grow through speaking the truth in love to those within our church family.** And **BOTH parties grow** this way. The one hearing the truth grows as well as the one who speaks it in love. **Often** it's a **bigger** growing experience **for the one needing to speak** than the one needing to hear. This is the way God **designed** it. **And we only hurt ourselves** when we ignore God's design -- When we try to **construct** our lives **without considering** God's instructions. Here is what the instructions say: We grow **best** in a covenant community where **truth** is spoken in **love**.

Illust: If your IKEA instructions **list off the tools you need** before you start to build, (Sometime there is a picture of two people working together saying -- **don't attempt this alone!**) God's instructions for us **contain this** on the first page: "**Best built in a community where truth is spoken in love.**"

Q: And what should that mean for us?

It means we need **open lives**. We need lives that are **opened up enough** to one another so that **truth-speaking** can take place. You're **not** going to get a **lot of direct truth-speaking to your problem** if you're **only** with the church for an hour a week and during that time you **wear a mask** -- pretending like you're happy and everything is okay. **But the deeper you dive** into this covenant community-- **the more time you spend** with your church family who loves you -- **the more opportunities** you'll have to open up your life to others, **and the harder it will be to hide.** **You can't forever hide** your temper -- You **can hide it** in a **one-hour-a-week** meeting, But hang out with us as your kids get into mischief on the playground **and then there is no place to hide.** **You can't forever disguise** the strained relationship you have with your spouse. Perhaps you can in a church service, **But it's much harder in a home group**, where you're sharing and praying for another. **Given enough time together**, We won't be able to hide any more. **And truth can be spoken in love** --if there is **openness and opportunity AND a depth of relationship.**

It's **hard to know** that a truth is spoken in love **when it comes from someone you DON'T really know.** That's why we need to cultivate a depth of relationship with one another, **where we KNOW we're loved.** We know this person **loves me and desires my best.** I can **hear and respond well** to what they're saying, **Because I know they love me.**

This is **the direction we want to travel** with **EVERYONE** who becomes a **covenant member** of this church -- We want to **cultivate an openness** of our lives with each other, **And a depth of relationship** that knows we're accepted and loved by one another, **even when the worst parts of us are put on display.** And if we have that, **Then speaking the truth in love won't be forced.** It will come **naturally.** And when it comes, **we'll welcome it,** Because we know **it comes in love and out of that depth of relationship.** And God designed it for our growth.

We'll grow up, as we do this together:

Verse 15, "Instead, speaking the truth in love, **we WILL in all things grow up** into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." Verse 16, "From him the whole body, **joined and held together** by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds** itself up in love, **as each part does its work.**"

It may surprise you, but **YOU have a part of play** in the growth of others. **You have a work to do** in building up Jesus' church. "The whole body ... grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.**" **You** have a part to play **in other's growth** in the gospel. **Likewise,** others have a part to play **in your growth.** As part of the church, **you ALSO grow** as others play their part and do the work they were meant to do. **Only TOGETHER do we properly grow up.** **Only together** can we grow into the maturity Christ desires for us. **Only together** can we grow into the instruments of God's grace that

He desires us to be. That's why (throughout the month of October) we're focusing on Church Membership. Our hope is (that after this month) That many of us will say, "**Yes, I want this kind of relationship with a church family in Paris.**" "**Yes, I want to be a founding member** of EIC Ternes." "I want to commit myself to speaking truth in love **in this community**, and see myself (and others) **grow up in Christ** because of it."

I hope that's where your heart is. If it is, you can **tell me**, Tell **Paul**, Tell **Ryan** (who is writing out a membership process that we will start in the new year). **Even if** you're only with us a short time, being a covenant member of a believing community **is always worth it.**

Because God is the Designer, and His design **is for you to grow up in a community**, a community who loves you and speaks truth to you. By God's grace and for His glory, let's commit ourselves to being that community for one another in Paris.

“The Gracious God” by S. Ryan Powell (Sermon 3 of 4)

Israel had been unfaithful to their God. Almost every king appointed was quickly assassinated. Alliances were being formed with pagan nations. God had broken up in to two kingdoms: Israel and Judah. The northern kingdom (Israel) became known for its moral corruption and its spiritual bankruptcy. The southern kingdom (Judah) was on a path towards idol worship.

God compares the unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah to one who goes off to marry a harlot. The children that were born from this marriage knew nothing about the God of Israel. So, Israel, had lost their distinct identity. They did not resemble the people of God. There was nothing about their life, their practices, or their gods that resembled the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that chose them. God uses this opportunity to display His profound character.

Read or Pray:

“Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted. In the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ they will be called ‘children of the living God.’¹¹ The people of Judah and the people of Israel will come together; they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.

“Say of your brothers, ‘My people,’ and of your sisters, ‘My loved one.’

When you were a child, do you remember doing things that would drive your mom or dad crazy? There is a certain age where kids begin to color on walls. Did you do that? Around the age of 5-6 is when children begin to cut their own hair. Some will even cut the hair of their siblings! As kids get older, some of the ‘accidents’ get more expensive. Like when they ride their bikes next to cars. The handle bars will dent or scratch a car in a moment’s notice. Do you remember your parents reaction the first time you did something like that?

Let me ask you another question: Instead of getting angry, did your parents instead take you to get ice cream? My guess is probably not. Why would you get ice cream? Ice cream is for those that receive grace! But what if they did give you ice cream the next time you made a costly mistake? You would probably never forget it. The sad thing is, we would eat that ice cream wondering if there was poison in it. We are not accustomed to receive much grace nor do we naturally give grace to others we feel do not deserve it.

God didn’t give us ice cream when we rebelled against him. Rather, he lavished us with His grace by giving us His Son.

Because God is rich in grace, our actions should be energized by His grace.

God’s response towards an idolatrous, ungrateful, rebellious nations was indicated by the names given to the children of this adulterous relationship: Lo-Ruhamah means “not pitied”. Judgment was coming and God would show no mercy to those who had rejected him. Verse 9 says, “After she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, Gomer had another son.”⁹ Then the Lord said, **“Call him Lo-Ammi (which means “not my people”), for you are not my people, and I am not your God.”** Judgment was coming to a rebellious people.

Just when we believe that there is no hope. Just when we begin to feel the weight of judgment coming upon a rebellious people, God says, **“Yet the Israelites will be like the sand on the seashore, which cannot be measured or counted.”** Does that sound familiar? God reminds them of the promise He had made with Abraham. God’s gracious promises should lead us to repentance, God’s graciously giving us His Son should lead us to faith, and God graciously restoring His relationship with us should lead us to the community of God.

Because God is rich in grace, we must live a life of repentance.

What does a life of repentance look like? It is a daily decision to say no to sin and conscience effort to follow after Christ and His ways.

Turn to the promises of God

God chose Abraham to be the father of many nations. Through one man, God built a nation that was purposed to be a light to the other nations. The Abrahamic Covenant is God's promise to His people. The surrounding nations were to look to God's people and see the glory of their God as He blessed them and as they were satisfied in Him. Through His people, God did amazing things. At certain times, the pagan nations took note of Israel's God. Now, God is telling His people they are no different from everyone else. But our God is a gracious God. Deserving nothing but judgment, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will show his children grace.

There are a lot of things that will capture a person's attention. If a chair falls down the stairs while I am preaching, we will all be startled and look towards the noise. An explosion may send us all in a panic and we suddenly will begin looking for shelter. But grace not only get's our attention, it will capture our heart.

A video recently went viral of a man hugging a women sentenced to life in prison. There is nothing out of the ordinary about someone hugging a condemned women. What was so profound about this video is the women was going to prison for killing the man's brother. He stood on the stand and told this women that he forgives her, that he has no animosity or bitterness towards her actions. Then, he asked if he could give her a hug. People watch that video because we rarely see such acts of grace.

Today, we are still called to reflect the grace of our God towards others. Needless to say, that man who hugged the women was a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace that God has lavished on us must be poured out on others that have wronged us, hurt us, offended us, and have rebelled against our God. Remind yourselves daily of the promises of God's grace when you are tempted to bring judgment on another, when you begin to meditate on how you were wronged, or when you believe you merit more than what you have received, but we often snap with judgment. When you sin, confess it, turn from it, and accept the grace that he freely offers. God says that he casts your sins as far as the east meets the west. He says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." When we remember these promises, we will freely give grace to others who do not deserve it and who can not earn it.

Turn to the living God

Biblical repentance is not something we do to work our way to Heaven. Repentance is turning from our sins and turning to the God of grace. When God says in verse 10, "In the place where it was said to them, '**You are not my people, they will be called 'children of the living God.'**' This communicates that those who repent will be restored and receive life. You will find a fountain of grace that will never run dry. In the place where you have fallen countless times, in the place where you have pursued other gods, in the place where you have turned your back on your God, He will grant you grace.

The "living God" is in contrast to the dead and worthless idols God's people had been worshipping. The "living God" is able to grant life. When we as God's elect, seek to satisfy our souls with possessions, food, or leisure, or anything besides our God, we pursue death. Our thirsty souls will never be quenched. Psalm 84 says, "**My soul longs,**

yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord: My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.” Psalm 42 begins, **“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”**

When we play sports, our bodies lose a lot of fluids. Those fluids will need to be replaced in order for your body to recover properly. I had a friend who insisted the only thing that would truly hydrate his body is several cans of beer. So, after we had finished playing a sport. He would begin drinking beers to “rehydrate” his body. I was young, but I knew this was nonsense. Alcohol dehydrates the body!

What are you doing to hydrate your soul? What do you do when you have sinned and need to be restored to the “living God”? Think about the first day you realized God had saved you from your sins, he offers that same grace to you today. Not everyone has a date, but I remember the day that I got on my knees and cried out to God to save me. I had spent 22 years trying to quench my soul with everything that the world had to offer. But that was the day I drank from the fountain of grace. I knew, without a doubt, that God had forgiven me and made me His own.

All of us who are in Christ, must wake up daily and bow our knees to the Living God and be energized by the grace of our God. The same grace you received when He saved you so many years ago. After walking with Christ for a number of years, we sometimes forget how gracious our God truly is. By His grace, we get up in the morning. By His grace, we pursue a life of holiness. By His grace, we are energized to live for Him. Once, we were considered dead in our trespasses. Today, we are children of the living God. Restored when we fall short, renewed daily by His grace.

Because God is rich in grace, we must live a life of faith.

How many times have you looked at another person’s circumstances and said, “I could never go through that?” In reality, you could because God’s grace is sufficient for all things. If God places you in a seemingly impossible situation, He will grant you the grace you need to get through it. By grace, we move forward in faith.

Believe despite circumstances

If Abraham’s promise was to be fulfilled, Israel had some significant growing to do. The thought of Israel growing to an immeasurable number was laughable to the surrounding nations. According to 2 Kgs 15:19-20, Israel had about 60,000 landowners. In comparison to the Assyrian Empire, this seemed like a joke! Then, you consider the twelve tribes of Israel divided into two separate nations with two separate kings and God says these two nations will be gathered together and the united nation will appoint one head to lead them. The text doesn’t say that God will give them a leader. Rather, two nations who had not been getting along will unanimously appoint this leader. This doesn’t seem possible.

When I was in language school at the Sorbonne, I went to get a coffee at Starbucks. One of my classmates saw me there and sat down at the table. Over a cup of coffee, I had the opportunity to share with her the gospel. She listened intently as I shared of the grace of Jesus Christ and how he made me a new creation in Him, and I said, “And He is able to save you if you repent and believe.” At first, she gave me a look that indicated she was thinking about what I had said. Suddenly, she busted out in laughter unable to contain how ridiculous the story sounded to her. She said, “You believe in a fairy tale!”

As believers, we do not laugh at the message, but we do recognize the obstacles involved in someone coming to Christ. We may look at family member, a friend, or someone’s external appearance and think, “There is no way they would receive the gospel.” There is

no way that the message of Christ would ever be good news to them. How is that any different than the Assyrian's laughing at Israel? Can God not save the hardest of hearts? He saved you. And the moment He did, your heart was overwhelmed by the absurd grace lavished upon you that you did not earn nor did you deserve, but by faith, you have it. When we lack faith, we fail to see our God over the circumstances.

Believe in His Son

How does God, through Hosea, encourage His people? He points them to Christ.

Christ has yet to appear, of course, so His people are to be faithful as they look to the future. God gives them a vision however that is much greater than they could imagine. God IS going to multiply His people, as he has promised in the Abrahamic covenant, but it isn't exactly how they would predict it. In Romans 9:22-26, The apostle Paul linked Hosea's words to the conversion of Gentiles through the gospel.

God's people are not granted membership into the family of God through birthright or citizenship. Hosea is indicating that God's family will be gathered and united by their faith in Jesus Christ. God's people, according to our text, will be gathered out of the world and under the rule of the Davidic king. When God says they will be united under "one head" we know this to be the future Davidic king" as Hosea later says in chapter 3:5.

Jesus is the "one head" (אֶחָד רָאשׁ) of a gathered Judah and Israel. The Davidic covenant alludes to a time where both Jew and Gentile will be united as one as the body of Christ.

The gift of God's grace just continues for God's people! Some people like to read the last chapter of a book before they begin reading the book. They don't like the suspense. They can't wait for the plot to work itself out for the big surprise in the end. As Christians, we have read the last page. We know how this story ends.

By faith, we must live in the midst of countless obstacles and trials with the firm expectation that God's perfect plan will not be thwarted. By faith, we can with boldness know that God will hear our prayers in Jesus Christ. By faith, we can look to the future with a hope that the world does not know nor can they comprehend. Because God was gracious enough to reveal himself in His word, we can by faith follow him wherever he leads. By faith, we know the message of restoration is possible not only for Israel, but for the nations when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Stuart comments that Jezreel "refers not just to Israelites being restored to God, but to the fact that people who never could have made such a claim, now, by the grace of Christ's sacrifice for the whole world, have the potential of joining with God's people."¹ The nations may escape the same judgement reserved for Israel and be known as "children of the living God" because it was always God's intentions to reach the nations through Christ. What a gracious God we serve.

Because God is rich in grace, we must live a life in community

Does this text have anything to do with church membership? Yes, it has everything to do with church membership!

¹ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 31 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 40.

A chosen community

Those who previously had no mercy and were not considered God's people (Hos 1:6-9) are to recognize their distinct relationship with God and one another. Hosea 2:1, "Say to your brothers, "You are my people," and to your sisters, "You have received mercy." The word "say" is a plural imperative. In other words, a reunited Israel and Judah are to say these words together, "God has remained true to his promises as found in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant. We have a distinct and special relationship with God."²

Today, we as the church say together, "through the work of Christ, we as the church, are the "innumerable people whom the living God has made his children (Rom 9:24-26)."³

In Madagascar, a person's last name communicates a great deal. I have a friend who has the last name: **ANDRIANAVALONA**. Another friend of mine from Madagascar is named, **ANDRIANJAKA**. Normally, if your last name has 14 letters in it, I will never remember it. But in Madagascar, your last name communicates meaning. Specifically, it will let others know your family background. Since both of these men begin their last name with Andriana...Everyone in Madagascar knows their family comes from royalty. There are hundreds of last names in Madagascar that begin with Andriana. They are directly related to a 19th century king of Madagascar.

As believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not have a last name that unites us, but the implications of our faith in Christ means that we are the body of Christ. We cannot separate our relationship with God and with other believers. We identify ourselves as people that were once "not a people" and join hands as the new people of God who do the work of our God.

This is why church membership is so important. This is how we identify ourselves from the surrounding nations that rebel against God. The church is how God separates us from the world, and continues to set us apart as He uses other believers in the church to build us up in the faith and to spur us on to become more like Christ in our thoughts and deeds.

Many of you are here in Paris for a short amount of time. Some are here until God leads you somewhere else. Regardless of the duration of your stay, every believer should attach him or herself to the local church. It is a commitment that communicates I am with Christ. I desire to be like Christ and to use my gifts to help others grow in Christ. I don't know how long I will be here, but while I am here, I want you to know that I join Christ's mission with you. Let's lock arms, united in Christ, and make Him known in this city.

A restored community

We are God's people, and 2:1 continues, "say to your sisters, "You have received mercy."

Did you know that the church is the gospel made visible? This is a title of a book by Mark Dever, but it is also an essential truth for the Christian.

Just like Israel, we can look back and remember a time when we were not God's people. But Galatians 3:29 states, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." In Christ, our status with God has changed, we can look

² James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, Old Testament Survey Series (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), chap. 15, sec. D, para. 7.

³ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 40.

forward knowing that God has granted us grace and restored our relationship with Him through the gospel just as he has promised.

Dana bought salad dressing a few weeks ago that refused to mix together. Oil and water do not intermingle. There is a clear barrier between the two substances. The church, however, comes together as one and under one head. The reason is because there are key ingredients that work together in harmony: First, there is a personal confession of sin. Second, there is a turning from that sin. Third, there is a turning to Jesus Christ who lived the perfect life that you and I cannot live to purchase a place for us in heaven. Fourth, there is a desire to live for Christ energized by His grace. When you shake up those ingredients, you have one body held together by our bond with Jesus Christ.

The world, who laughs at the gospel message, through the visible church recognize the powerful impact that gospel has on human lives. It is not normal for all of to be together today. We come from different cultures and backgrounds. We are not the same age, nor do we all share the same hobbies. EIC Ternes displays the gospel message that we vocally proclaim to others who find it to be a 'fairy tale'!

I trust you have recognized this afternoon, God has clearly defined a community of people to be distinct for His eternal purposes in both the Old and New Testament. Noah and his family were distinct, Abraham and his descendants have the promise, the nation of Israel was chosen, and the New Testament church is to be the clear distinction to display the character of God.

Because our God is gracious, lets commit our lives to daily repentance, daily faith, and daily community for our good and the glory of His grace.

“The Worshipping Church” by S. Ryan Powell (Sermon 4 of 4)

As we wrap up our series on church membership, Peter, this afternoon is going to point us to the priority of worship.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10

In my opinion, sports have gotten out of control. Take Soccer (Fut or Football) for example, we will build giant stadiums to hold as many worshippers as possible. We will paint our faces, wear the team colors, and behave in ways that would grant you immediate access to a mental institute if you acted this way anywhere else. Our emotions are tied to the sport. If we win, we are in a good mood and it is a reason to celebrate. If we lose, we go in to a state of morning.

The players have devoted their lives to the sport. We will pay them millions of euros to entertain us. Their personal character is not that important to us. We just want them to kick the ball into the net. In the end, we may get a trophy. This was what it was all about. That trophy will mean everything to us....until next year.

There has got to be more to life than pursuing a trophy that will never satisfy, that will soon be collecting dust, and have absolutely zero eternal value. I'm not saying we can't play sports or be a sports fan, but if this is our passion, than we have a problem. A reporter asked a guy who was competing for a championship if winning this trophy would be the happiest moment of his life. He responded, “The happiest moment of my life was when I realized that I don't need a trophy to be happy.”

Did you know that God is meant to be our supreme value. He is to be our prized possession. We don't have to paint our faces to say that we are with him, but the pursuit of him is a worthwhile passion. Because in Him we find all we need. In Him, our longing souls will be satisfied. The same enthusiasm that we invest in corruptible things should be reserved for the worship of the eternal God who satisfies our longing souls.

Because God is our supreme value, we as the church must make the worship of God our absolute passion.

The apostle Peter encourages us to consider all that we have and ask ourselves if there is anything else your heart desires besides God. Because God is our supreme value, worship what is good, what is right, and what is excellent.

Because God is our supreme value, we must worship what is good.

Did you know there is a bad way to worship? All of mankind is a worshipper to some degree so this is a simple question if you consider golden calves, false gods, and pagan temples. For Christians, bad worship is linked to a bad attitude.

Undeified Worship

Worshippers of God desire their worship of God to be fulling pleasing to the Lord. Our worship is pleasing to the Lord when we come to him with an attitude of humility and gratitude. Peter is calling us to, “rid ourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.” This does not mean, however, clean yourself up and God will accept your worship. Peter tells us in chapter 1:23, why we rid ourselves of these things-we have been born-again.

In other words, in Christ, you don't need them! This is who you were before Christ saved you. Do you remember? You were like a pig in the mud. Your motives were focused on your own personal gain. You would deceive to get an advantage in life. Before Christ, you will say one thing and do something completely contrary to what you said. You

wanted what other people had and you would slander their name to build yourself up. We were not worshippers of God. We deserved the wrath of God. But then God saved you. He gave you a new heart with new desires.

Worship with an attitude of humility means we approach God knowing that all of the wrath that we rightly reserved for our malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander was poured out on Jesus Christ. God ransomed us by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the lamb without blemish or spot. Through his sacrifice, we have a new heart with new desires. Because of his sacrifice, we rid ourselves of these things.

But we do not forsake sin as religious practice or ritual. A religious ritual brings your works to the altar of God. Look Lord, I put these things off today so that you would be pleased. Instead, because we are pleased in him, we put these things off.

Worship him in gratitude because He took your place on the cross. He is the one that revealed the sin in your heart and the one who made a way for forgiveness when you were dead in your trespasses. Worship that is pleasing to the Lord is grateful for the work that has been done in Christ, not what we have done in our own efforts.

Saved to Worship

Have you tasted that the Lord is good? Worshipping God is not designed to feel like a burden. Jesus said that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. If a life of worship seems heavy, than you are not drinking your milk.

Modern interpreters are almost unanimous in the understanding that milk is a metaphor for the Word of God (Jobes, 1Peter). And the word of God is something that all of must crave, not just new believers. I highly doubt that everyone in Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, the recipients of this epistle were all new believers. So, as we read God's word, as God's word is preached, as we hear God's word, we grow spiritually, but we have yet to plunge to the deepest of depths on this side of the cross. We must crave more of God and his revealed word. We must commit ourselves to throwing off sin, but we must regularly feed on the word of God. Why? Because our worship is acceptable when we consider the God we worship.

When we are feasting on God's word, we filter what we think, see, and experience through his word. When we stray from God's word, we forget His character, His nature, His mighty works. And when we forget, our sin natures come to the forefront. Our motivation to worship can be motivated by fear or insecurity. We may believe we will lose favor with God or be punished if we do not do the right thing. The Scriptures say, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn 4:9-10). It was God that first loved us. While we were filthy in our sins.

In certain cultures, it is more who about who you know in the church than knowing God. If your sin is exposed or if you want control how the church operates than you just need to build an alliance in the church of powerful people. In order to build this team, one has to be malicious, deceitful, and hypocritically. This is not the way it is supposed to be!

God has called us to love one another, think the best of one another, and rejoice in the blessings of one another. But we were created to first love God. Love the Lord you God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. When we invest our time and energy growing in our love for God by craving His word. The will then manifest a love for God's people. These sins Peter mentions will be cast aside as you grow in your love for God first and then His people.

We were saved to worship. Tim Keller notes, as we read God's word we will discover that we are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe. That does not mean that we start looking for powerful people to cover our backs in case others find out. But we will also recognize that we are more accepted and loved than we ever dared hope." As we grow in this fact, the sweeter our salvation will taste and the more we will desire to rid ourselves from sins that separate us from our God.

Because God is our Supreme Value, we must worship what is right.

Have you ever showed up for a Bible study, but knocked on the wrong door? You won't get in even if someone is home. Worship that is acceptable is in Christ.

Worship in Christ

First Peter 2:4 begins with believers who have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who "come to him" (Jesus) as the text says have repented and placed their trust in Jesus Christ. The implications of coming to Christ, according to Wayne Grudem, extend far beyond salvation. The verb "come to him" (προσέρχομαι) can also mean to "draw near" in the LXX or to hear God speak (Lev 9:5; Deut 4:11, 5:27). This verb has also been used to enter the tabernacle and offer God a sacrifice (Exod 12:48, 16:9; Lev 9:7-8, 10:4-5).⁴ But, under the New Covenant, we do not draw near to God with an animal sacrifice or ceremonies. Hebrews 10:19 says that, "...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." In Christ, we are able to enter the Holy of Holies knowing that we are welcome and our worship is received.

Notice the supreme value we have in Christ as Peter compares and contrasts believers with the person of Jesus Christ. Christ is identified as the "Living Stone" (λιθον ζωντα) (2:4a); believers are like "living stones" (ως λιθοι ζωντες) (2:4b); Jesus is also referred to as the cornerstone (κεφαλην γωνιας) (2:6). The cornerstone is considered "chosen" (*eklekton*) and "honored" (*entimon*)." These words are in contrast to followers of Jesus who are "never to be shamed" (μη κατασχυνθη). Furthermore, Christ followers in verse 9 are a "chosen race" (εκλεκτος γενος). Grudem explains the word *chosen* "would suggest a sharing in the blessings of God's 'chosen' people in the Old Testament, as well as a sharing in the privileged status of Christ, the 'chosen' rock (1 Pet. 2:4, 6)."⁵ Followers of Jesus have been chosen out of the world to know and worship Jesus. Edmund Clowney confirms, "The status of Christians depends upon the status of Christ, for they are joined to him."⁶

⁴ Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 103.

⁵ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 117.

⁶ Edmund Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 83.

When I was in the military that was like being in another world. I took for granted how easy it was for me to get on military base. After eight weeks of bootcamp, a horrible hair cut, and a new wardrobe, I was officially identified as member of the U.S. military. If I showed up in uniform and with the correct military id, I could use all of their facilities, shop at their grocery store, and eat in their cafeteria. I has been welcome in to the military community. Once I was discharged, I felt like they don't even want me near the gate! My time was served, my credentials were returned, and I was no longer identified with the military. I was cast out of that world. I was no longer identified as a member of the Armed Forces.

We are not worshipping God unless our complete identity, authority, privileges, and blessings are linked to Christ. It is union with Christ that gets us into the doors of acceptable worship. There is no other door.

I gave the military four years of my life, but after discovering the supreme value of Jesus, I don't want a life apart from Him. Listen, you may be holding off on this Jesus thing until you accomplish a few goals you have in this life. Now, I want to ask you a question. What is your greatest achievement in life? When you wake up every day, what achievement makes you the most proud? Whatever came to your mind, I want you to set it aside. You don't need it. A life of worship is not based on what we have achieved, rather, what has been achieved for us in Christ. Let this truth sink in and you will free from seeking the approval of others or hoping someone acknowledges your good works. Your greatest accomplishment is found in Christ. In Christ, we will never be cast out. In Christ, we will always be welcomed. In Christ, we can enter where no mere person can go and still live.

Worship in Spirit

Can you hear the sweet sound of worshippers throughout the world? Through God's Holy Spirit, worship is worldwide!

In verse 5, Peter is referencing a house that is spiritual "because it is animated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit."⁷ God grants his children the Holy Spirit to universally unite all who have placed their trust in Christ—the cornerstone of the "spiritual house." Believers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation have been gathered together through God's Spirit as the representation of God's universal church (Rev 7:9). I love Sundays because I imagine Spirit-filled believers gathering for worship before I woke up, as I am preparing for church, and long after we are finished. And God is in the process of making more worshippers as His Spirit opens the eyes of those blind to their sin and need for Him.

God is building up the universal church and in this church he is raising up a priesthood. Schreiner observes, "When the verb 'build' (*οἰκοδομέω*) is combined with 'house' (*οἶκος*) in the Septuagint, the temple is often in view."⁸ The fact that the Old Testament temple is in view is supported by Peter's reference to "a royal priesthood" (v. 9). The Temple has been replaced by the Spirit-indwelted church and the new priests are being built up for worship through God's Spirit.

⁷ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude, 1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 105.

⁸ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 105.

Here is what I find cool about all of this: We wear the Spirit wherever we go. Volunteers with the Red Cross are given a red vest when they do volunteer work. There is a local épicerie near my home filled with people walking around in red vests. They are all working with a common purpose and goal. You don't put on the red vest and go watch television. The vest sets you apart from others for the service of the Red Cross.

Worship cannot be isolated or relegated to just one place, time, or segment of our lives.⁹ All worship of God in the power of the Spirit is acceptable to God. Since we are Spirit indwelt, our profession, done in the power of the Spirit, is worship to God. Parenting, not perfect parenting, but Spirit-dependent parenting is worship to God. Praising God, doing good, and sharing with others—all legitimate by those indwelt with the Spirit are scriptural acts of worship.¹⁰

Don't label Sunday afternoon's as the only time we worship. This is corporate worship. Through the Holy Spirit, our entire life is worship.

Because God is our Supreme Value, we must worship what is excellent

If everyone is a worshipper, how do we know one is a worshipper of God?

Worship together

God is building a corporate body of worshippers who have been transformed by the gospel message. God set apart Israel according to his perfect plan and sovereign election. Israel was chosen by God as the surrounding nations were characterized by their rejection of God. Now, First Peter 2:7 is a citation of Psalm 118:22 the rejected stone in context is the Davidic king. The builders represented the foreign nations “that rejected the rule of the anointed king of Israel.”¹¹ Although both Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 relate to the Jews as the group who “rejected” (ἀπεδοκίμασαν) and stumble (προσκοπτουσιν) after encountering the cornerstone, 1 Peter 2:8 indicates that those who “disobey the word” (τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες) are addressed. Schreiner clarifies, “The “message” (λόγῳ) here is the gospel—the same word God uses as a seed to beget new life (cf. 1:23–25; cf. 3:1).”¹² The same “Word” that caused us to be born-again, to throw off sin, allowed us to savor the sweet taste of salvation is what is being rejected.

We are gathering today corporately as the local church because we affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ. Throughout this city, there are more local churches that affirm the gospel. They too are our brothers and sisters in Christ. If a group of people gather together, and they do not affirm the gospel, they are not part of God's church. Their worship is in vain.

As we institute church membership at EIC, membership is reserved for those who affirm the gospel of Jesus Christ. You might struggle communicating the gospel like a theologian, but membership into the local church is an affirmation that you have heard and been transformed by the message of the gospel. I want to encourage you to pursue church

⁹ John. MacArthur, Jr., *The Ultimate Priority: John MacArthur, Jr. on Worship* (Chicago: Moody, 1998), 13.

¹⁰ MacArthur, *The Ultimate Priority*, 16.

¹¹ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 111.

¹² Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 112.

membership. This is how you identify yourself from those who are in rebellion with God. This is also when the church affirms that you a member of God's new priesthood. And when we gather, we can be confident that we are worshipping the one true God.

Worship with Words

Do you see worship as a privilege? The local church, the EIC, was not created by random purposeless events. We were chosen by God for worship.

1 Peter 2:9 makes it clear that membership into the family of God is for those God has chosen. Thanksgiving and gratitude should rise up in our hearts as we consider God's sovereign election. Peter calls us a chosen "race" because at one point in time one had to descend from Abraham. Grudem adds, God's chosen people are no longer said to be those physically descended from Abraham, for Christians are now the true 'chosen race' (v. 9). The nation blessed by God is no longer the nation of Israel, for Christians are now God's true 'holy nation' (v. 9). The people of Israel are no longer said to be the people of God, for Christians—both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians—are now 'God's people' (v. 10a) and those who have 'received mercy' (v. 10b).¹³

In Christ, believers have the promise of Abraham and corporate responsibility to proclaim 1 Peter 2:9: "The excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς).

But doesn't this seem like the natural thing to do? We ask people if they watched the game. We wear the colors to let people know who we are rooting for. Each one of us have a conversation button, and if I find it, you will talk for days. KJ, Lord of the Rings. Ed, Florida football, Patrick, France. Marc, food. Stephanie, podcasts. Logan, music. Evangelism, discipleship, and world missions is not supposed to be so complicated. It is a form of worship. It is easy to share about things we care about and even more so about our supreme value.

David Livingston, missionary to Africa, suffered a great deal while trying to advance the gospel in an unreached land. He was once asked if it was difficult to leave a comfortable life to find himself in such dire situations. Do you what he said? It was never a sacrifice. It was a privilege. Livingston considered it a privilege to advance the gospel regardless of the cost. ([*Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*](#), 1981, 259)

I want to encourage you one more time to consider the privilege of church membership. Join hands with the local priesthood of believers as we rid ourselves of sin, grow in the knowledge of God, proclaim his glorious gospel, pursue a spirit-filled life, and advance the gospel to the nations. We are the church, it is what we do, it is who we are, it is our life, because we have found God to be our supreme value.

¹³ Grudem, *1 Peter*, 119.

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A MEMBERSHIP CURRICULUM AT EMMANUEL INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF TERNES IN PARIS, FRANCE

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. John M. Klaassen

This project seeks to develop and implement a membership curriculum at Emmanuel International Church of Ternes in Paris, France. Chapter 1 provides the unique ministry context of an international church and the goals of this project. Chapter 2 provides exegesis of five passages of Scripture (Hos 1:9-10; 1 Pet 2:4-11; Acts 2:40-47; 1 Cor 5:1-13; Eph 4:11-15) to show the importance of church membership. Chapter 3 presents the views, examples, and content provided in church membership courses. Chapter 4 describes the content and teaching methodology of the membership curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the efficacy of the project based on completion of the specified goals. This project seeks to provide opportunities for individuals to become a member of the local body, understand the importance of membership, and reap the rewards of membership.

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