

Session 7 - Membership Matters

1) Membership is biblical.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27 *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...* Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Notice what Paul says here. “Just as the [human] body has many members...so *it is* with Christ...” In other words, membership is a fact of church life. Paul does *not* say, “You should consider becoming a member.” He says, “...You *are*... *members* ...” (v.27). We are members of the body of Christ by virtue of the Spirit’s work. “For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body” (v.13). In the Scriptures, then, membership is not so much an option to be considered, but rather a reality to be recognized.

You may say, “I agree with all of that, but why should I become an official member of a specific local church like Redemption Hill?” Good question. Hopefully the next section will help you.

2) Membership is practical.

It helps believers to carry out their biblical responsibilities toward each other.

Some things in the Bible would be extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to obey without some sort of membership that is mutually recognizable by both leaders and those who are under their care. The command below from Hebrews 13:17 is just one example.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account...*

Who are “your leaders” in the sense that is meant here? Certainly, the author of Hebrews has actual people in mind. If you say, “I know who those leaders are,” but there is no mutually recognizable agreement between you and them, how will *they* know that they have God’s permission to relate to you as an authority figure who is accountable to God for “keeping watch over your soul?” Membership helps all of us by making these things clear for all parties involved.

We are to be faithful to the “one-anothers” with believers outside our local church as God gives us opportunity. (1Thes 5:12-15) However, membership helps us know which Christians on Planet Earth we are **primarily** responsible to love, serve, warn, and encourage.

Redemption Hill Statement of Faith

A. The Scriptures

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books known as the Old Testament and the 27 books known as the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is a vital and perfect record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God, the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches.

Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are called to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in the Holy Scriptures.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21, 3:16; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; John 16:12-13, 17:17; Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Psalm 12:6; Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2.)

B. The Nature of God

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty and perfect in holiness, justice, truth, and love. In unity of the Godhead, there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All of which are co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each is truly Deity. One God-three persons (Father, Son and Spirit) is the foundation of Christian faith and life.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19; Colossians 2:9)

C. God the Father

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By his word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing. Through the same Word he daily sustains all his creatures. He rules alone over all His creation. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him and in his immeasurable grace gave his Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with himself and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory.

(John 1:18, 5:18, 6:46, 20:17; Acts 2:39; Romans 1:7, 8:28, 15:6; James 4:15; 1 Peter 1:3; Philemon 1:3; Ephesians 1:11; Job 42:2; Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:25, 34-35)

D. Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word of God made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching and deed. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation and in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed his blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross.

By his death in our place, he revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day he rose bodily from the grave,

victorious over death and the powers of darkness and for a period of forty days appeared to over five hundred witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of his body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served and obeyed by all.

(Romans 3:24-26; 1 Peter 1:3-5, 2:24; Ephesians 1:7, 5:23; John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 2:14-18)

E. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel he leads men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth and dwells within every believer. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored and worshipped as God the Third Person of the Trinity.

(John 16:8-11; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 5:18)

F. Man

God created mankind, male and female, in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being alienated from his Maker, yet responsible to him, man became subject to divine wrath, sinful by nature and, apart from the grace of God, utterly incapable of returning to God. From birth, man is sinful both by nature and by deed. Unregenerate man lives under the power of sin and Satan. He is an enemy of God, hostile toward God and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or good works, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ.

(Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 3:22-23, 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3, 12, 5:2)

G. The Gospel

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases his holy wrath. It also demonstrates his mysterious love and reveals his amazing grace.

Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross.

(Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; John 1:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19)

H. Salvation

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance, and trusting Christ and his substitutionary death alone, receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is attributed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through

Christ's atonement for sin, an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes his child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, through the miracle of new birth, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit.

(John 1:12-13, 3:5-8; Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Eph. 2:8-9; Jeremiah 23:5-6)

I. Sanctification

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce his fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit, we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping his commandments and endeavoring to live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship and confession, are a vital means of spiritual growth in this regard.

(Galatians 5:22-26; Philippians 3:12; 1 John 1:8-10, 2:1; Matthew 6:11-12; Romans 6:11-13, 17, 10:17, 12:1-2; Galatians 5:16-18; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Hebrews 3:12-13, 4:12,10:14; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:11; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; Mark 9:24; Luke 22:31-32; Ephesians 1:18-19, 3:4, 6:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; Psalm 1:1-3, 119:18, 36, 86:11)

J. Eternal Security

We believe that all the redeemed are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. We believe it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion to indulge the sinful nature. We believe that the saved person will be in a process of being conformed to the image of Christ and will bear spiritual fruit with their life by the power of the Spirit.

(John 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, 38, 39, 13:13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Galatians 5:13; Titus 2:11-15; 1 Peter 1:5)

K. Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit empowers believers for Christian witness and service. The Holy Spirit desires to continually fill each believer with power to witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the church and the work of the ministry in the world. The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion and is the placing of the believer into the Body of Christ. We also believe that particular spiritual gift(s) are neither essential for proving the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor an indication of a deep spiritual experience. However, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first-century are available today and are to be earnestly desired and practiced. They are essential in the mission of the Church in the world today.

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 13-18, Romans 12:6-8; The Book of Acts)

L. The Church

God by his Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ through the free grace of God.

The Church exists to worship and glorify God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve him by faithfully doing his will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and

churches planted in the entire world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the gospel. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer.

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given ministry gifts to the church (including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through the ministry gifts all members of the Church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry.

Each local church should recognize and affirm the divine calling of spiritually qualified men to give leadership to the church through the role of pastor-elder in the ministry of the Word and prayer. Women are not to fill the role of pastor-elder in the local church, but are encouraged to use their gifts in appropriate roles, including the office of deacon, that edify the body of Christ and spread the gospel.

(Ephesians 1:22-33, 4:11-12, 5:25-27, 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12-19; Acts 14:23, 27, 18:22, 20:17; 1 Timothy 2:12, 3:1-13, 5:17; Titus 1:5; Revelation 5:9)

M. Customs of the Church

Following the pattern of the New Testament, baptism is intended for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself and the world, a believer should be baptized in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

As with baptism, the Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance signifies the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body.

(Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42, 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

N. The Final Judgment

We believe that Jesus will return to earth to judge all people and to rule and reign with His saints forever. All people will be resurrected to give account of their lives before God. The believer in Christ will be resurrected to everlasting blessedness and joy in the presence of God. The unbeliever will be resurrected to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment. (John 5:22-29; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Timothy 2:11-12)

O. Marriage

We believe that Marriage unites one man and one woman in a lifetime commitment to each other (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage provides for intimate companionship, pure sexual expression (Genesis 2:25; Ephesians 5:31-33), procreation, and reflects the relationship of Christ and the church (Genesis 1:28; Proverbs 5:15-19; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5). A husband is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the church. A wife is commanded to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Redemption Hill Membership Covenant [Ratified 8.28.14]

Redemption Hill Church exists to glorify God by cultivating gospel-centered, grace-driven, mission-minded people in Richmond and around the world. The members of Redemption Hill commit to participate in this mission through the following commitments.

Pastors' Commitments

In addition to fulfilling the membership commitments below, the pastors of Redemption Hill commit to care for you as those who will give an account to God (Heb.13:17) for the way in which they have fulfilled the duties of their office. As such:

- We commit that all of your pastors will meet the biblical criteria for eldership (1 Tim.3:1-13; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- We commit to set an example for the rest of the church in the way that we fulfill the duties of church members (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Tim. 4:12).
- We commit to teach and to provide counsel from the whole of Scripture (Acts 20:27-28).
- We commit to seek your growth as a disciple of Christ, in part by equipping you for service (Eph. 4:11-13) and by praying for you regularly, particularly when you are sick (James 5:14).
- We commit to protect you and the rest of the church from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31), and to exercise loving church discipline when necessary (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13, Gal. 6:1).

Members' Commitments

As members of Redemption Hill, we commit to live according to our new identity in Christ as His Disciples (John 8:31), His Family (Mark 3:33-34), His Ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), and His Servants (Rom.12:11, Gal.5:13).

Disciples: We take responsibility for our own discipleship and for the discipleship of others.

- I have been baptized as an entry sign of my new covenant relationship with God and my identification with the universal church. I commit to regularly participate in the Lord's Supper. (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Acts 2:36-38, 41; 1 Cor.10:16-17).
- I commit to regularly attend the gatherings of Redemption Hill to hear the Word of God and to encourage one another with the same. (Matt.4:4, Hebrews 10:19-24).
- I will also make a sincere effort to apply the Word of God to every aspect of my life and heart and to walk in holiness by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit (James 1:22-25, 1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 Peter 4:1-3). This includes practicing abstinence (if unmarried), complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage, and refraining from pornography, illegal drug use and drunkenness. (Romans 1:28-32; Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18; James 3:3-18).
- I commit to work and to pray in order to preserve unity and peace among the members of Redemption Hill (Eph. 4:1-3). Therefore, I will refrain from any effort to promote among Redemption Hill's members any teaching that is inconsistent with its Statement of Faith (1 Tim. 1:3).

Family: We are children of God who live and care for each other as a family.

- I commit to live in gracious accountability with my brothers sisters as we are members of one another. (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25)
- I will obey our leaders and submit to them in such a way that it will be a joy for them to keep watch over my soul. While a member of Redemption Hill, I will not function as a member in another church family. (Heb.13:7, 17)
- I commit to love other members as brothers and sisters. I will resolve any conflicts with others in a biblical fashion. To uphold “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” I will refrain from gossip, slander and false testimony. (Col. 3:1-17; Eph 4:3).
- I will confess my sins to Christian brothers or sisters and seek help to put my sin to death (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5; 1 John 1:6-10).
- If I consciously continue unrepentant in sin, I will submit to church discipline, the goal of such being love, reconciliation and repentance so that the gospel is seen and God is honored (1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15).

Servants: We eagerly serve our brothers and sisters as well as those to whom we are sent as a demonstration of the gospel.

- I commit to serving others with the resources, the talents, and the spiritual gifts that God has given to me for building up the body of Christ and for doing the work of the ministry (Romans 12:3-13; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:7-11). This includes the cheerful contribution of my time and money to support the mission of Redemption Hill Church (Malachi 3:6-10; 1 Cor 16.2; 2 Cor 8:1-5, 9:6-15).
- I commit to letting my physical, emotional and spiritual needs be known to others so they can meet those needs and experience the grace of God that comes through love and sacrifice. (Acts 4:33-35).

Ambassadors: We live actively as ambassadors sent by Jesus to make disciples.

- I commit to being active in making disciples, helping those who are currently outside of the faith to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-21).
- I will support and pray for the work of Redemption Hill to make disciples of all people groups by planting churches in the US and internationally (Acts 13:1-3; 3 John 6-8; Matthew 28:18-20)

Redemption Hill Membership Covenant Affirmation

I am in agreement with the primary issues in the Statement of Faith and the Membership Covenant of Redemption Hill Church. If, at any time in the future, I feel that I can no longer fulfill this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Redemption Hill Church, I agree to notify Redemption Hill's leadership so that we can discuss those things.