**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PREPARATION - CLASS #1**

**Membership Vow #1:** *“Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and the New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?”*

**I. “BELIEF**”: **WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN YOUR LIFE!**

 A. Everyone has a “belief structure”, i.e. everyone is “religious”.

 See: Acts 17:22, Romans 1:18-25

 B. Everything in our lives must flow from proper beliefs, i.e. a true or correct faith.

 See: Hebrews 11:6, Romans 10:8-17

**II. THE FOUNDATION (PRESUPPOSITION) OF ALL OUR BELIEF**:

 **THE BIBLE *IS* THE WORD OF GOD**

A. Terms: *“Bible” “Old & New Testaments” “Holy Scripture”*

 B. “Inspiration”: II Samuel 23:2, II Timothy 3:16f., II Peter 1:20f. Also: Matthew 19:4f.

 C. “Inerrancy”: Galatians 3:16, I Timothy 2:11-14

Some other examples: Romans 5:12-21; I Corinthians 15:45ff.; Hebrews 11, etc.

 D. How God’s Word came to us: See Exodus 4:10-12.

 E. Proof:

 1. The Bible’s own claim: *“Thus says the Lord”*, *“The Word of the Lord came...”,* etc.

 2. Internal Proofs: Fulfillment of prophecy, unity of themes, historical accuracy, etc.

 3. External Evidences: Archaeological finds, growth of Christian Church, etc.

 4. Witness of the Holy Spirit. See I Corinthians 2:14

**III. THE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE: GOD SAVES HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS!**

A. Sin’s Entrance Into the World and Its Effects: See Genesis 3:1-8

 B. God’s Work: See Genesis 3:15.

 1. His Old Testament “Covenants” with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David

 2. A consistent “falling short” of the Old Testament people of God.

 a. No perfect righteousness. See Romans 9:30ff.

 b. No perfect atonement for sin. See Hebrews 7:12 - 10:18.

 3. The need of a Divine Savior. See Isaiah 63:5.

 C. Salvation Accomplished: See Matthew 1:21

 1. Christ’s perfect obedience.

 2. Christ’s perfect atonement.

 D. Salvation Applied: See Ephesians 2:8-10, cf. Romans 1:16f., 5:1, etc.

 NOTE: Beware of making anything else the focus of Scripture. See Luke 24:44-47

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 “Our vision of God must be controlled not by what we *see* in the world, but by what Scripture authorizes us to *believe*.” Ian Murray

 “Jesus saw Himself as the key to Scripture, & the Scripture as the key to Himself.” J. I. Packer

**CLASS #1: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Is it correct to say that everyone is religious? What does that mean?

2. Does what a person believes really make any difference? Why or why not?

3. Isn’t it old fashioned to believe the Bible is the Word of God?

4. How can 66 books without error be written by dozens of authors who were full of error?

5. If someone claims to believe in Christ as his/ her Lord, what should that person believe about the Bible? Why?

6. Prove that the Bible is the Word of God.

7. Aren’t you reasoning in a circle when you say you believe the Bible is the Word of God because God says that it is? Doesn’t this bother you?

8. How is sin one of the strongest proofs for the truth of the Scriptures? Cf. “*The doctrine of original sin is the only philosophy empirically validated by centuries of recorded human history*.” G. K. Chesterton.

9. In your own words, what is sin? Why is it so serious?

10. What do we mean by the word “*salvation*”? How would you explain and describe it to a non-Christian?

11. Do you really believe the Bible contains “*the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation*”? Why?

12. Can you confess from the heart that you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and the New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

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**SUGGESTED READING:**

Blanchard, John. *Ultimate Questions*. (Evangelical Press). This is an excellent booklet to give to non-Christians.

 Cummings, Calvin Knox. *Confessing Christ* (GCP). Chapters 1,2

 Cummings, Calvin Knox. *The Covenant of Grace* (GCP).

 Thomas, Geoffrey. *Reading the Bible* (Banner of Truth)

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“No sciences are better attested than the religion of the Bible.” Isaac Newton.

 “The shortest road to an understanding of the Bible is the acceptance of the fact that God is speaking in every line.” Donald Grey Barnhouse.

 “The faith will totter if the authority of the Holy Scriptures loses its hold on men. We must surrender ourselves to the authority of Holy Scripture, for it can neither mislead nor be misled.” Augustine.

 “Salvation, the salvation of men, is the final purpose of the whole Bible.” S. Barton Babbage.

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PREPARATION - CLASS #2**

**Membership Vow #2:** *“Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?”*

**I. GODS AND GOD: EVERYONE HAS A FAITH COMMITMENT TO SOME KIND OF GOD.**

 A. “Gods”: These are the idols that everyone makes to take the place of the true and living God, e.g. the mind, work, money, pleasure, sex, another person, self. \*An idol is anything you live for and look to as that from which you believe you receive your greatest happiness. It is, essentially, a counterfeit God. See: Acts 17:22, Romans 1:18-25

 B. “God”: It is essential that you not make a mistake here. It is eternally dangerous to serve an idol rather than the true and living God. See: Hebrews 11:6, Romans 10:8-17

**II. THE ONE TRUE AND LIVING GOD:**

A. There is only one true and living God, i.e. monotheism.

 See: Isaiah 44:6 & 45:21,22; Jeremiah 10:10, John 17:3, I Thessalonians 1:9.

 B. In order to do justice to all of the data of the Bible, we must believe that the one true and living God is, has been, and will be for all eternity three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

* God is one. See: Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19. People are baptized into the NAME of God.
* The Father is God. See: Malachi 2:10; John 4:21-23 (and many references to the Father in John’s Gospel); I Corinthians 8:4,6
* The Son is God. See: Matthew 3:17; John 1:1,14,18 &10:30; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6: Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-4
* The Holy Spirit is God. See: Acts 5:3,4: Lying to the Holy Spirit is also lying to God. Hebrews 3:7-12
* The Bible speaks of these three persons as one God. See Genesis 1:26, “Let **us** make man in **our** image…” The “us” is unfolded in the rest of the Bible, e.g. Matthew 3:16,17 & Matthew 28:19. II Corinthians 13:14

 Q. *What is God?*

A. God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

 Q. *Are there more Gods than one?*

 A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. (*The Shorter Catechism* questions 5, 6)

**III. JESUS CHRIST: GOD THE SON WHO TOOK FLESH & BECAME MAN: *God incarnate.***

 A. Jesus Christ is God the Son

 See: Matthew 3:17 & 17:5; John 1:18; I John 4:9.

 B. God the Son took flesh and dwelt in the world as the God-man.

 See: Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23; John 1:14, Galatians 4:4

 Q. *Who is the Redeemer of God’s elect?*

A. The only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

 Q. *How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?*

 A. Christ, the Son of God, became man, by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin . (*The Shorter Catechism* questions 21,22)

**CLASS #2: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1.John Calvin, perhaps the greatest theologian of the Protestant Reformation, stated “man’s nature, so to speak, is a perpetual factory of idols” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion, I:11:8).* What does that mean? Why is that the case? Why is that so dangerous?

2. John Calvin, commenting on Bible texts like Jeremiah 10:8 or Habakkuk 2:18, comments on idols as “teachers of lies” by saying, “whatever men learn of God from images is futile, indeed false.” Likewise: “All who seek the knowledge of God from these are miserably deluded” and “Whatever knowledge of God is sought from images is fallacious and counterfeit”. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion, I:11:5).* Discuss how all idols teach, and why that teaching is false.

3. “It is eternally dangerous to serve an idol rather than the true and living God? Why? Isn’t the true and living God merciful and forgiving?

4. What’s the problem with having two or more “true and living gods”?

5. What does Matthew 28:19 teach you about the doctrine of God? What is the significance of being “baptized into” the name of God?

6. Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that the Holy Spirit is a force. Can you show from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a person?

7. Jehovah’s Witnesses also teach that the Son is the first created being. How would that fit with texts like John 1:1,2,14-18; Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1:1-3?

8. Does the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God make him less than God?

9. What’s the real meaning of Christmas?

10. Did Jesus Christ cease being a man when he ascended into heaven?

11. Can you confess from the heart that you believe in the one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?

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**SUGGESTED READING:**

Keller, Timothy. *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope That Matters* (Dutton). In a popular style which adeptly addresses modern men and women, Keller develops the theme of “counterfeit gods” and their absolute inability to do what can be done only by the true and living God.

 Packer, J.I. *Knowing God* . (IVP) This is without doubt the finest treatment of the biblical doctrine of the true and living God available. Packer writes warmly, engagingly, and practically. This, like Keller’s work, is a great book to use for personal or group Bible study.

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“The Trinity is the basis of the Gospel,

and the Gospel is a declaration of the Trinity in action.” **J. I. Packer**

 **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PREPARATION - CLASS #3**

**Membership Vow #3:** *“Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself, but in Jesus Christ alone?”*

**I. THE IMPORTANCE OF “CONFESSION”, i.e. “to say the same thing as...”**

 e.g. I Timothy 6:13, cf. Matt. 27:11; Jn. 18:37. Rom. 10:8-10.

 NOTE: “Confession” is a statement of how things stand *before God.*

 “*The man of God must imitate the Son of God in making the good confession*.” Norman Shepherd

**II. CONFESSION ABOUT YOURSELF BEFORE GOD:**

 A. “*Sinfulness*”: i.e. “Total depravity”. e.g. Gen. 6:5, Is. 1:6, Rom. 3:9-20

 1. So total: Man will not come to God by nature, Eph. 2:1, Jn. 6:65.

 2. So total: Necessitates God’s work to save.

 a. “Election”: Eph. 1:3-14, Rom. 9:6ff.

 b. “Effectual Calling”: Jn. 3:3ff., Eph. 2:1-10, Tit. 3:4ff.

 B. Practical Effects of This Confession:

 1. “*Abhor yourself* ***before God***”: Job 42:5,6, i.e. “melt away” Read Job 38-41

 2. “*Humble yourself* ***before God***”: Isaiah. 66:1,2; Lam. 3:22, Matt. 5:3-5; Lk. 15:21, 17:10, 18:13. Prov. 26:12.

 3. *“Repentance”:* Turning FROM your sin, UNTO God. Acts 20:21, II Cor. 7:9-11

**III. CONFESSION ABOUT YOURSELF BEFORE GOD IN CHRIST:**

A. “*Trust*”, i.e. Believe in for salvation, cf. Eph. 1:12ff. References in the Psalms.

1. Intellect: “I **know** I am a sinner, and Christ alone can save me.”

 2. Emotions: “I **feel** I am a sinner, and Christ alone can save me.”

 3. Will: “I **turn** from my sins unto Christ, Who alone can save me.”

 i.e. “Conversion”: Ps. 51:13, Matt. 18:3, Jn. 12:40, Acts 3:19

 B. Trust in What?

 1. “*Not in yourself*” i.e. vs. all forms of “Phariseeism” and works-righteousness.

 e.g. Lk. 18:11,12. Galatians, esp. 2:16.

 2. “*But in Jesus Christ alone*” Acts 16:30f.

 a. “I trust that my sins and judgment were placed on Jesus.” e.g. II Cor. 5:21

 b. “I trust that Christ’s perfect righteousness is given to me..”

 C. Consequences. Romans 8:29f.

 1. **Justification**, Rom. 3:21 - 5:21. What is justification? *Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.*  WSC 33

 2. **Adoption**, Rom. 8:12-17. What is adoption? *Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.* WSC 34

 3. **Sanctification**, I Cor. 1:2, 6:11 (Next class) What is sanctification? *Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.* WSC 35

 4. **Glorification**, I Cor. 15:35-38.

 5. **Summary**: We glory in the Lord!!! I Corinthians 15:35-38

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“For those who would learn God’s ways, humility is the first thing, humility is the second thing, and humility is the third thing.” **Augustine.**

**CLASS #3: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What does it mean to “*confess* with your mouth Jesus as Lord”, Rom. 10:9? Why is this so important?

2. How sinful are we by nature? Is it wrong to put such a big emphasis on this? Why/why not?

3. What are some of the implications of the doctrine of “total depravity”?

4. Do you really “abhor yourself?” Isn’t that language too strong? Is it proper? Why/why not?

5. What is the difference between “abhorring yourself” and “abhorring yourself before God”?

6. What is humility before God? How is it expressed? Give some biblical examples.

7. Give some personal examples of how “because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God”.

8. Give some specific examples of how you repent of your sin. Why is this in the present tense?

9. What is the difference between “*belief*” and “*trust*”?

10. Do some people really trust in themselves for salvation? How? What is the danger in this?

11. In your own words, what does it mean to “*trust for salvation in Jesus Christ alone*?” What is the comfort in this?

12. How many of your sins did Jesus die for? For how many people’s sins did Jesus die?

13. Is the word “*alone*” very important in this membership vow? Why/why not?

14. Can you confess from the heart that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

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**SUGGESTED READING:**

Benton, John. *Coming to Faith in Christ* (Banner of Truth). This is an excellent booklet to give to serious inquirers about the way of deliverance from sin and death.

 Cummings, Calvin Knox. *Confessing Christ* (GCP). Chapter 3.

 Eyres, Lawrence. *Are You a Christian*? (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 Orthodox Presbyterian Church, What is the Reformed Faith? The High Points of Calvinism. (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 Spurgeon, Charles. *How Can a Just God Acquit a Guilty Man?* (sometimes simply entitled *A Just God*). (Chapel Library) This is a superb Gospel tract that very simply gets to the root of the issue in the matter of how a person can be right with God.

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“Sins are so remitted as if they had never been committed.” **Thomas Adams**

 “Ours is the religion of the forgiven.” **Theodore Williams**

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PREPARATION - CLASS #4**

**Membership Vow #4:** *“Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve Him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?”*

**I. THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST**

A. “*Jesus*”, i.e. “Joshua”; “Deliverer”, ‘Saviour”. See Matthew 1:21, cf. Deut. 31:1-8

 B. “*Christ*”, i.e. “Anointed One”, “Messiah”. See Psalm 2:2, cf. Matthew 16:16.

 1. His Offices as “The Anointed One”:

 **Prophet**, e.g. Jn. 1:1-3, 14, 18; **Priest**, e.g. Heb. 2:17f., 4:14-16; **King**, e.g. Matt. 28:18-20.

 2. This vow: Emphasis on Christ’s **Kingship.** \*All Christians have a King!

 C. “*Sovereign Lord*”, i.e. “Jehovah”, “Master”. See Romans 10:9.

 Also see: Eph. 1:19-23, I Cor. 15:25-28, Rev. 1:9-20, 5:1-14, 19:16, Psalm 2.

 D. “***Your*** *Sovereign Lord*”, i.e. Personal submission to Him as your King.

 e.g. Matt. 6:24, 7:21-23,24-29; “servant”, e.g. Rom. 1:1, Phil 1:1, etc.

**II. BECAUSE OF CHRIST’S LORDSHIP: YOUR PROMISE:**

 A. “*In reliance on the grace of God*”: See John 15:15, I Cor. 15:10, etc.

 cf. ‘Means of grace”: Word, Sacraments, Prayer, Fellowship. Acts 2:42

 B. “*I will serve God with all that is in me*”: See Matthew 4:10, 22:37f.,; Rom. 12:1f.

 NOTE: Everything in the Christian life flows from this commitment.

 C. “*I will forsake the world*”: Matthew 13:22, I John 2:15-17, Romans 12:2.

 D. *“I will resist the devil”:* Matthew 4:1-11 (your model!). James 4:7; I Peter 5:6-11

 D. “*I will put to death my sinful deeds and desires*”: Rom.8:13, cf. 6:1-14, also Matt. 5:29f., Gal. 5:24, Eph. 4:17ff., Col. 3:1ff.

 NOTE: The classic treatment of this topic was done by John Owen, a great Puritan theologian. You may find this in volume 6 of his *Works* or in other more popular treatments.

 E. “*I will lead a godly life*”: Best defined by the 10 commandments, Heb. 8:10\*

 1. The **First** Commandment The **Object** of True Worship

 2. The **Second** Commandment: The **Manner** of True Worship

 3. The **Third** Commandment: The **Attitude** of True Worship

 4. The **Fourth** Commandment: The **Time** of True Worship

 5. The **Fifth** Commandment: Reverence for **Authority**

 6. The **Sixth** Commandment: Reverence for **Life**

 7. The **Seventh** Commandment: Reverence for **Marriage**

 8. The **Eighth** Commandment: Reverence for **Property**

 9. The **Ninth** Commandment. Reverence for **Truth**

 10. The **Tenth** Commandment Reverence for **God as Our Chief Desire**

 *\**This superb outline of the meaning of the 10 commandments was developed by G.I. Williamson.

NOTE: We must never forget that we obey God’s commandments, e.g. Psalm 119, not *to become* Christians, but *because we are* Christians! See Galatians 2:16.

**CLASS #4: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

 1. Why is the hymn, “O The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus” listed in our hymnal under the topic of “Sanctification”? Give biblical support for your answer.

 2. What are some of the implications of Jesus being “the sovereign Lord”? What is the difference between acknowledging that Jesus Christ is *the* sovereign Lord, and that He is *your* sovereign Lord?

 3. Can Christ be your Savior if He is not your Lord? Why or why not?

 4. Are we endangering the Gospel of grace if we emphasize that a non-Christian must receive Christ as both Lord *and* Savior?

 5. What is “the grace of God” on which we rely to keep our promise to live a Christian life? Isn’t it a contradiction to speak of grace that is sovereignly bestowed and “means” by which grace comes to believers? Give reasons for your answer.

 6. How do you intend to rely on the grace of God to live your Christian life?

 7. What does it mean to “serve God with all that is in you”? Give some biblical examples and illustrations.

 8. Present both biblical and unbiblical forms of “forsaking the world.” How do *you* forsake the world?

9. Is the devil real? How does he work? How do you intend to resist him? (Hint: Follow the pattern that Christ used in resisting the devil during his time of temptation. See Matthew 4:1-11)

10. Practically speaking, what is it to “put to death your sinful deeds and desires”?

11. Do you agree that the 10 Commandments are our standard for godly life? Isn’t it better to speak simply of “loving God and our fellow man” as our standard? Doesn’t the Bible say that “we are not under law, but under grace”, Rom. 6:14? Explain.

12. What’s the difference between the first and the second commandments?

13. Give some contemporary forms of idolatry. How do we avoid becoming idolaters ourselves?

14. In your own words, what’s the meaning of the second commandment?

15. What are some common ways in which God’s Name is taken in vain?

16. Isn’t the call to “Remember the Sabbath Day...” done away with in the New Testament? See Mark 2:27f.

17. What day is the “Christian Sabbath”? How should it be observed?

18. Why are we called to respect those in authority over us?

19. How are we to “not murder”? See Matthew 5:21-26

20. How are we to “not commit adultery”? See Matthew 5:27-32

21. Is gambling a violation of the eighth commandment?

22. What are some common ways that people “bear false witness against their neighbors”?

23. Why is covetousness equated with idolatry in Ephesians 5:5?

24. What ought our motivation(s) be in obeying the 10 Commandments?

24. Can you from the heart acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and *do* you from the heart promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve Him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

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**Suggested Reading:**

 Cummings, Calvin Knox. *Confessing Christ* (GCP), chapters 4,6.

 DeWitt, John R. *What is the Reformed Faith?* (Banner of Truth).

Martin, Albert N. *The Practical Implications of Calvinism* (Banner of Truth).

 *Westminster Larger Catechism,* questions 91-148. \*This is, without doubt, the most succinct but rich exposition of the meaning of the 10 Commandments which has ever been written. Study the answers *with* the accompanying Scripture passages. Nearly 70 items are given in answer to the question, “*What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?”* (Q. 145) alone! You will want to get this as part of *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, questions 39 - 81. An abridged version (!) of the above. It is also available in the above-mentioned volume, as well as in handy pocket editions. Along with Scripture memorization, there are few habits more important than memorization of the Shorter Catechism.

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“The serene, silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world, next to the might of the Spirit of God.” C. H. Spurgeon

 “Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness.”

 Adrian Rogers

 “I often pray, ‘Lord, make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be.”

 Robert Murray M’Cheyne

**CHURCH MEMBERSHIP PREPARATION - CLASS #5**

**Review: Vow #1: Your final authority for faith and life.**

 **Vow #2: The God in whom you believe.**

 **Vow #3: The faith you profess as a Christian. i.e. “*Conversion*”, “*Justification*”**

 **Vow #4: The life you live as a Christian. i.e. *Sanctification***

 **Vow #5: Your commitment to a local Christian church.**

**Membership Vow #5:** *“Do you promise to participate faithfully in this church’s worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?*

**I.** **WORSHIP**: ***The highest calling of each human being.***  Worship is *“ascribing worth*” to God.

 A. In one sense, all of the Christian life is worship. See Romans 12:1,2. Here the Christian life is called a “reasonable service”. The term used here is the word from which we get “liturgy”: An order of worship.

 B. Worship is also praise and thanks that we give to God personally, in our families, and when we gather together as a church. The Psalms, in particular, are our guides for worship, e.g. Psalm 100.

 C. It is important that Christian believers meet regularly for worship as the church of which they are members is called to meet. The Lord meets with us (See Matthew 18:20) and ministers to us during these times, using what we call the *means of grace*, i.e. the preaching of the Word of God as it focuses on Christ, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the fellowship of the saints, and prayer (See Acts 2:42). These times are necessary for our faithful perseverance in following the Lord (See Hebrews 10:23-25).

**II. SERVICE: *We are saved to serve!***

1. In General: By doing those things that show and tell the love of Christ to others. See Eph. 4:7-16
2. Specifically: By using the gifts that the Lord gives to each of His people. See I Corinthians 12.

**III. SUBMISSION, AND ITS IMPORTANCE**

 A. In General: See Luke 7:8, cf. Romans 13:1ff., I Peter 2:13ff., Ephesians 5:21.

B. Specifically With Respect to This Vow: To Church Government: Hebrews 13:17, I Peter 5:5.

**IV. “THIS CHURCH” i.e. “The Orthodox Presbyterian Church”**

A. The OPC: 1936 - the present.

 B. This particular local congregation of the OPC.

**V. “THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS CHURCH”**

 A. Ultimately: Christ is the Only King and Head of the Church, Col. 1:18.

 B. Instrumentally: Rule by *Elders*/*Presbyters*. Acts 20:17-35, esp.vs.28.cf.I Tim.3:1-7, I Pet. 5:1-4.

 NOTE: Biblical rule by Elders is always a “*shepherding rule*”cf. Ps. 23, Lk. 15:1-7, I Pet. 2:25.

 1. “*The Session*”, i.e. Plurality of Elders. Acts 20:17, Philippians 1:1.

 2. “*The Presbytery*”, i.e. Regional gathering/court of Elders. I Timothy 4:14.

 3. “*The General Assembly*”, i.e. Widest gathering/court of Elders. Acts 15.

 C. The Place of “*Deacons*”. Acts 6:1-7, Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:8-13.

**VI**. “**THE DISCIPLINE OF THIS CHURCH**”

 A. “*Discipline*”: “To make a disciple, i.e. a follower, of someone. See Matthew 28:19.

 1. “*Formative Discipline*” e.g.. I Timothy 4:11-16, II Timothy 4:1-5.

 2. “*Corrective Discipline*”, e.g.. Matthew 18:15-20, I Corinthians 5

 B. Areas of Discipline:

 1. Doctrine: e.g. I Timothy 4:2, Acts 20:30, Romans 16:17f.

 2. Life: e.g. I Corinthians 5, II Thessalonians 3:14ff.

 C. “Heed its Discipline” = Hear it! Listen to it! e.g. Matthew 18:15-17.

 NOTE: This brings us back to the first membership vow: **Our authority**!

**CLASS #5: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Discuss why worship is “the highest calling of each human being?” Why is it so important that we worship God only as He has specifically told us to do in His word?

2. Talk about various ways to worship God personally and in families, i.e. family worship.

3. Read I Corinthians 12 and discuss how the church is to function as a body, with each member serving, doing his or her share.

4. What gifts has the Lord given you for Christian service? How should you be using these gifts?

5. Why is submission to authority so important? What are the limitsto *all* submission to authority?

6. Why is submission to authority in the church so rare today?

7. Why would someone want to submit to the authority of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?

8. Isn’t it a contradiction to refer to Christ as the only King and Head of the Church, and at the same time speak of submission to the Eldership, i.e. the Session? Isn’t it just sufficient to say that we submit to Christ?

9. Why would God place the government of a local congregation into the hands of a *plurality* of elders? What are the advantages of this system?

10. What are the advantages of having “broader (or higher) courts of the church”, i.e. Presbytery and General Assembly? Is this system biblical?

11. What should be our attitude toward the elders of the church?

12. In your own words, what is the “discipline” of a local church?

13. Is church discipline really all that important? Why?

14. What purposes does church discipline serve?

15. How should *you* respond to church discipline?

16. Can you from the heart promise to participate faithfully in this church’s worship and service, to submit in the Lord to the government of this church, and to heed its discipline even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life??

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**Suggested Reading:**

 Brown, Mark and Larry Wilson. *Why Join a Church?* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 Cummings, Calvin Knox. *Confessing Christ*, chapter 5.

 Hart, D. G. & John R. Muether. *Fighting the Good Fight: A Brief History of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* (OPC Committee on Christian Education). An excellent introduction to the OPC!

 Reed, Kevin. *Biblical Church Government* (Presbyterian Heritage Publications).

 Shishko, William. *Helps for Worship*. (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 *Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 *Welcome to the OPC: A Primer on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 *What is the OPC? Basic Information About the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)

 Witherow, Thomas. *The Apostolic Church: Which is It?* (Various Editions). This is the classic treatment of questions about plurality of elders, how they are called out from the congregation, etc. It demonstrates how biblical Presbyterianism avoids the errors of both independency and hierarchy.

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 “As the saving doctrine of Christ is the life of the church, so discipline is, as it were, its sinews.” John Calvin

“It is the church’s task to turn adherents to the church into possessors of Christ.” Kenneth Kirk

“Those who would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ’s family must submit to the discipline of it.” Matthew Henry

**THE ISSUE OF “INFANT” BAPTISM**

1. The basic difference between the “Baptist” and the “Paedo” (Infant) Baptist” view:

 a. Baptist View: Biblical Data > Biblical Prinicple

 b. Paedobaptist View: Biblical Principle > Biblical Data

 Question: *Which view best fits all the biblical data?*

2. Presuposition: The Essential Unity of the Old & New Testaments, i.e. Covenants

 \*WCF VII:5,6, cf. Gal. 3; Acts 15:11, Rom. 3:29f., Rom. 4, Heb. 13:8.

3. “The Covenant of Grace”

 Essential promise: *“I will be your God…”,* Gen. 17:7, cf. Matt. 28:18ff.

 **OLD COVENANT** **NEW COVENANT**

**FORM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 E.g. Rom. 11:16,17f., Ex. 19:6 cf. I P. 2:9f., Acts 7:38, Gal. 6:16

**OUTWARD**

**SIGN OF \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**MEMBERSHIP** (Gen. 17:9ff.) (Matt. 28:18-20)

 Cf. Col. 2:11f. I Cor. 10:1ff/Phil. 3:3

**MEMBERS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)** **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** (of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_)**

 (Gen. 17:7, 9f.) (Acts 2:39)

 1. Prophesied: Is. 59:20f., 61:8f., etc.

 2. Fulfilled: Acts 16:15, 33f., I C. 1:16

 cf. Eph. 1:1, 6:1-3

 NOTE: The household principle is not abrogated in New Testament.

**MEMBERSHIP = \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **SALVATION???**

 Is. 1:2-4, Jer. 4:4 Heb. 10:26-31

**HEART OBEDIENCE**

**NECESSARY FOR \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**SALVATION**

 Rom. 2:25-29 Rom. 6:1-11

**SUMMARY**:

 1. Circumcision & baptism are both signs of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

 2. Seal of membership in the visible church demands obedient response of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

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**Suggested Reading:**

 Wilson, Larry. *Why Does the OPC Baptize Infants?* (OPC Committee on Christian Education)