

Covenant (church)

Matthew 16:24-25 | 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

Say, This past Sunday was a great day in the life of Friendship Community Church. Michael spoke on the beauty of Covenant and the local body of believers. And, for the first time in the eleven year history of our local body, we were encouraged to enter into a covenant agreement together.

Say, The first point of the sermon is I am surrendered to Jesus.

Have someone **read** Matthew 16:24-25 "Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Ask someone to read Romans 10:9-10 and reflect that there is also a public profession of one's surrender to Christ.

Ask, Why do you think there is a need for Christ-followers to speak their commitment to a surrendered life to Christ?

(Many times we choose to live Christianly hoping that someone will notice a difference in us. In Acts 8, Dr. Luke recounts the story of Philip and the eunuch and in v. 35 we find these words, "*Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*" It is important that we not only live in a way that points others to Christ, but that we speak the gospel as well.

Say, In Mark 16:16, baptism is also public display of placing one's hope and trust in Christ alone. We identify with Christ that we are a follower of Him. (Remind participants that baptism is not salvation, but is an outward action that lets others know that we are identifying with Christ and fellow Christ-followers.)

Read Galatians 3:27.

Ask, What does it mean to put on Christ? (It is a deliberate action on our part to decide to live in a way that brings glory to God. We don't put on actions to try and convince God to love us more. We put on Christ because of His great love for us and our desire to bring Him glory in all things.)

Say, the second point of the sermon is **I am a part of something bigger.**

Say, One of the challenges of western Christianity is that one can get locked on the "personal side of salvation" and miss that we are a part of great and large body of believers, both globally and locally. And it is a diverse body unified around one central figure, Jesus Christ.

Read Galatians 3:28-29. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

Ask, What is a beauty of being a part of a diverse local body of believers? (There are many but one of the greatest is that it causes us to focus on the Christ in us rather than preferences. Diversity for too many is divisive rather than unifying. As we stay focused on Christ, unity flourishes and our preferences diminish.)

Assign these verses to be read and allow for reflection.

Revelation 7:9 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

Romans 14:1 - As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions.

Colossians 1:16-17 - For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Say, The third point of the sermon is **I am trusting God to lead our leaders.** The leaders of any church (an organism rather than an organization) are not infallible nor do they profess to be. Leaders are to be surrendered to Jesus and realize that God has placed them in a position to shepherd and guide the local body of believers.

Assign these verses to be read

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Say, One of the ways that we can support our leaders is to pray for them and commit them to the Lord.

Ask, What are some practical ways that we as members and regular attenders can pray for our leadership?

1 Timothy 5:17 Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

Say, Biblical leaders are deserving of honor and those leaders who preach and teach are deserving of double honor. The responsibility of shepherding and guiding Christ followers in the local body is not taken lightly here at Friendship.

Hebrews 13:17 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

Ask, Do you think this is a bold statement in scripture where the writer of Hebrews says to watch your leaders and imitate their faith? (This is added responsibility for those in leadership to live surrendered and bring glory to God in the way they live.)

Say, The final point of the sermon is **I am giving my all to the body where I belong.**

Say, While there is great responsibility for leaders to live in a way that is surrendered and there is also a surrendered responsibility for those who are a part of the local body.

Ask, Do you think consumerism has affected how we view our commitment to a local body of believers? If so, how do you see that played out?

Summarize 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Focus on the fact that each member of the body is important and necessary.)

Say, 2 Corinthians 9:7 is a verse that states the importance of giving and how we give. Remind participants that the Apostle Paul is addressing those who are continually surrendering to Christ. So in determining “each one give as He has decided in his own heart” is another opportunity to model surrender rather than preference.

Share the following verses as you have time.

Luke 6:38 - give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

1 Timothy 6:17–19 As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

Galatians 6:6-10 Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

The Membership Covenant statements are based upon these four points. The Membership Covenant language is included below and feel free to cover these statements if time permits.

Close your time in prayer after sharing prayer requests.

At Friendship Community Church, we don't believe you have to check your church heritage at the door. Opinions and views around second and third level theological items are not litmus tests for church membership, but the elders only ask that if a member differs from the stated theological stand of the church, they do so humbly and charitably without dissension or tenaciousness.

All theological issues are important, but this simple covenant focuses on a member's surrender, diversity, trust, and sacrifice that should be present, in some form, in every New Testament church believer. By signing this covenant, we welcome you and your household to the body!

1. I have and continue to surrender my life to Jesus and have been baptized as a public statement of my new life in Him under the new covenant. (Matthew 16:24–25, Romans 10:9–10, Mark 16:16, Galatians 3:27)

2. I realize that this new covenant with God is between Him and His people, the church, and we are to be members of a diverse body of believers, defined by and rooted in the Bible, not our preferences. (Galatians 3:28–29, Revelation 7:9, Romans 14:1, Colossians 1:16–17, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

3. I trust the elders to guide and the staff to lead the church as God and His scriptures instruct them. (Acts 14:23, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17)

4. I affirm the importance of being a connected member of the body, regularly gathering with my church family for worship and regularly giving of my time, talents, and treasure for the great commission of making disciples and personally growing in Christ through Friendship Community Church, my local church. (1 Corinthians 12:12–27, 2 Corinthians 9:7, Luke 6:38, 1 Timothy 6:17–19, Matthew 28:16–20)