

## Free Grace Church Membership Podcast - Intro

**Pastor Matt:** [00:00:09] Hi this is Pastor Matt troupe from the Free Grace Church in Fresno and I want to welcome you to our membership podcast. This is going to be a series of audio discussions. And the purpose of this is to help you walk through some of the content in our membership class. So likely if you are listening to this you've been coming to Free Grace Church for a little while and you're interested in formal membership and taking the next step. So hopefully this podcast will help you to understand some of what is involved with membership and make our discussions when we get together for a class a little bit more fruitful. The purpose of this episode of our podcast is to give you an overview of the membership process and our membership document. We do have a church covenant and that church covenant is published in a little booklet that includes several other documents that are helpful. And before we get to that I just want to read a scripture and if you have a Bible you can turn to Acts Chapter 2 verses 41 and 42 because this is an important part of the discussion.

[00:01:15] So in the Book of Acts chapter 2 Peter has been preaching and a great number of people become Christians and it says in Verse 41, "So those who received his word were baptized and there were added that day about 3000 souls and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

**Pastor Matt:** [00:01:42] And so what we have here is Peter preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus and the people who are listening to him at the time of Pentecost, basically they repent. They receive his word and Peter has told them to repent and be baptized. And so they do that. And there's this very interesting language here that "there were added that day about 3000 souls" and we know from other scriptures that that terminology means "they were added to the church" and then immediately we have this description that those people who came to faith who received the words of Peter "they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread and to the prayers". What I want to point out right now is this phrase in Verse 42. "They devoted themselves". That's really a huge part of church membership. It is a way of devoting yourself, it's a way of being committed to the body of Christ and to the church and to what the church is all about and to what the church does. And we've tried to express that in our membership covenant. The Bible doesn't say specifically what we

have to do to have church membership. It definitely teaches some important things and then each church and each culture is going to kind of help to look at scripture hopefully and explain and put this into practice. But the bottom line is that when we read the Bible Christians don't have a "casual relationship" with the church. They don't have a "consumer relationship" to the church the way you would have a relationship with a restaurant or you know some favorite place that you shop. As long as they provide the goods and the services that you like at the price that's convenient, or the location's convenient then you shop there, if not you move on. There's something more going on. There's a real deep commitment and in subsequent episodes we will attempt to discuss this and show you from scripture.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:03:39] When you look at the booklet that includes the church covenant, there's a table of contents, and there's various things that are in that. The big idea of the covenant over all involves commitment. Just like we read an Acts chapter two about being "devoted" or "devoting ourselves" so there is in our church covenant our commitment to God, our commitment to one another, and our commitment to the mission to fulfilling the Great Commission and we're going to talk about that but those are the three big categories of what the church covenant talks about. We will talk about one of our episodes about why we actually have church membership and why we believe that's a Biblical principle, something very important for churches to have. And also in that little booklet that we have you will see "a statement of faith". And by that we don't mean necessarily the statement of what we believe but of our personal faith. So to be a member of Free Grace Church you need to be a Christian. And we're going to talk about what it means to be a Christian. We're going to talk about a statement of biblical doctrine. So what is it that the church believes what are the doctrines? Who is God? Who is Jesus? What is the Bible? How do you get saved? All of those kinds of things and much more are in our various statement of Biblical doctrines and we have a short summary. We also have included some ancient creeds and a longer document as well.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:05:15] But those express what we believe and the idea is really truth in advertising. We don't hide anything about who we are and we want folks to know what we believe, because we believe that when you have the truth of Jesus, that it helps you grow and worship and it sets you free. The church covenant also includes this section that talks about "obligation". So if you become a church member, What is your obligation to the church? And then what is the church's obligation to you? What do the

leaders and the rest of the church commit to do for you? And I trust that that will be really helpful for you. At the end of each one of these things. I would like to ask the question, So what? And so in just a minute I'm going to talk about a couple obligations but I wanted to throw out one more thing. We also talk about in our membership class there are some "core values" and these are some things that are important to us, that set us apart from probably some other churches that you have been a part if you have been a Christian for a long time or you've been a member of other churches and so we'll also talk through those at some point now. "So what?" What should you do or what does this little podcast have to do practically with moving forward?

**Pastor Matt:** [00:06:36] What I want to encourage you to do is listen to the episodes of the podcast, read through the documents or read through the church covenant, and when there are some scriptures there, please read those especially when we look at one in particular. We are really committed to the Bible and we want you to be able to read and understand that for yourself and understand why we are doing what we're doing and then please prayerfully evaluate that says you go through ask for God's help and understanding and whenever you don't understand anything, or if there's any confusion or maybe even if you disagreed, all of that is OK. Write that stuff down. And we will discuss it. And all of this we hope will be an encouragement to you and help you understand church membership at Free Grace Church.

**Pastor Matt:** [00:07:22] I look forward to walking through this time together with you. Would you pray with me?

**Pastor Matt:** [00:07:28] Lord God would you help us to understand your word and to faithfully love the church the way you love the church to be healthy Godly members of your body, in Jesus name, Amen.