

RiverTown Membership | membership faq

Why does RiverTown have “members”?

RiverTown is a church, and the Bible uses the metaphor of a body to describe the church: “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” ([1 Cor. 12:12](#)). It’s a beautiful illustration of how we’re each created to serve different functions. We need everyone to function in order to be a healthy body, and all of us as separate parts should find purpose and unity under Jesus, “the head of the body, the church” ([Col. 1:18](#)). Members make up the church ([Eph. 2:19-22](#)).

What’s the difference between a member and somebody who just goes to RiverTown every week?

At RiverTown we make a distinction between “members” and “guests.” If you’re not a member, then you’re technically a guest that remains to a certain extent separated from our church family and separated from the maturity, protection, accountability, and care that comes with being an active part of the church. This may not make much difference for visitors and non-Christians, but Christians who consume rather than commit to a local church do a disservice to themselves and to Jesus’ body (the church). Members, on the other hand, participate as the church: sacrificing time, talents, and treasure; committing to the care and community of their fellow members; and submitting to the authority God has established to lead our congregation. In short, the difference between a member and a non-member is that members are “on mission.” Simply put, attenders are renters of the ministry, while members are owners of what God does here.

What does it mean to be “on mission”?

To be on mission means that you’re a Christian, that your identity is founded in Jesus, and that you embody the RiverTown mission statement by living a life of worship to Jesus (reaching up), a life of fellowship with other Christians (reaching in), and a life of mission to non-Christians (reaching out) ([Matt. 28:18-20](#)). These expressions are only possible with an identity established in Jesus.

Why should I become a member?

RiverTown Church is a family, adopted by God ([Gal. 4:6-7](#); [Eph. 1:5](#)). We care for each other, pray for each other, and serve together. If you’re already a Christian, if you’re already in some form of RiverTown community, if you’re already giving of your finances and your time, then you’re already fulfilling some functions of a member. Without making an official commitment, however, we cannot provide you the same level of pastoral care and community support we could offer if you were a member. This is in part because we may not know who you are, and in part because the Bible requires that we take care of our family first ([Eph. 2:19](#) cf. [Gal. 6:10](#)).

If you’re not a Christian, don’t worry about membership until you’ve been reconciled to God through Jesus. If you are a Christian who has spent a lot of time at RiverTown, however, search your heart and identify

your hesitation. There may be valid reasons to abstain from RiverTown membership. But we're rebels by our cursed nature; if you bristle at the very idea of becoming a member, ask yourself why—and don't hesitate to speak with a ministry leader.

What are the benefits of being a member?

Scripture calls us a body, a family, a household. Being a Christian is not a solo effort. Jesus works through the church ([Eph. 2:10](#)). The church is Jesus' body ([1 Cor. 12:27](#)). Apart from Jesus, you can do nothing ([John 15](#)). This isn't Blockbuster, it isn't a country club, and it isn't 24-Hour Fitness. According to God's plan, members are the church. "In love [God] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ...So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" ([Eph. 1:4-5](#); [2:19](#)). You don't join for the perks. The benefit is that we get to worship Jesus together, serve in His kingdom together, and be children of God together! We enjoy the guidance that his Word provides, and, when sin comes between us, we enjoy the reconciliation Jesus' blood provides. We support each other and care for each other as we follow Jesus together.

Why should I give to and serve in a local church?

God commands us to live a life of generosity towards Him and others. This is for our benefit. A life of generosity reminds us that life is not about us, but about God. The biblical standard for giving is 10%. This is called a tithe. Sacrificial giving is assumed in the Bible to be anything above the biblical tithe. This is to be given to one's local church ([Mal. 3:10](#)). We, in keeping with Scripture, recognize there are tough life situations in which one is not able to tithe. God understands this. However, a follower of Jesus should always seek to tithe whenever possible. If one is not able to tithe because of a life situation, it is our belief that sacrificial giving is sufficient while in a difficult season of life. Many are blessed by God in a way that they are able to sacrificially give above the biblical tithe. The point of giving is not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice. Giving should be done joyfully.

How do I become a member?

It's a three step process: Connect, Covenant, and Conversation. Connect is our Membership Class. This is the first step in the process. At the membership class, a potential member is handed a copy of the membership covenant. Signing this covenant is the second step in joining RiverTown. The final step is a membership interview, that we simply call a "Conversation". During this conversation, we will simply chat and dialogue with you about how you became a Christian and what being a member at RiverTown is all about. We will also answer any questions you may have about our church. This conversation is with your life group leader, ministry leader, or pastor.

What is a "member covenant"?

A covenant is a promise by which we obligate ourselves to one another in such a way that the obligation of one party is not dependent on the faithfulness of the other ([Ezek. 20:44](#); [36:22](#); [Ps. 76:11](#); [Hos. 2:19-20](#); [3:1](#); [2 Tim. 2:13](#)). A covenant is what we would use to describe the vows between a husband and his wife and between God and his people. We ask our members to sign a covenant so that we know that

prospective members understand what it means to be a part of the church. The member covenant is not a legal document or some sort of cultic rite. It is an affirmation, an agreement, and a source of accountability for both the church and its individual members.

Do members have to be baptized?

Since Jesus commands that all of his disciples be baptized, baptism is a requirement for all RiverTown members ([Matt. 28:19](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [10:48](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#)). If you've already been baptized since you became a Christian, you don't need to get re-baptized. RiverTown performs believer baptisms only, which means we don't baptize infants. If a prospective member was baptized as a baby and does not want to be re-baptized due to reasons of conscience, that is acceptable as long as this decision remains personal and does not become a divisive issue within the church. If you have more questions about baptism specifically, please speak with a pastor, life group leader, or ministry leader here at RiverTown.