

Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives: Being a Part of Treasure Valley Bible Church

Local churches often use “church membership” as a tool to assimilate visitors and formally acknowledge those who wish to be part of a congregation, yet there is no biblical basis for this practice.¹ Being part of Treasure Valley Bible Church is based upon a believer in Jesus Christ regularly attending TVBC, and should involve being actively involved in our congregation. In Ephesians 4:11-16, the Apostle Paul describes three ways that we are to be actively involved:

1. **We are to be equipped by the elders for the work of service (vs. 11-13)**

In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul writes, *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”* Several observations can be made about the relationship between elders and the individuals of our congregation:

- The phrase *“pastors and teachers”* should be translated “shepherd-teachers.”² This phrase refers to elders within local churches.
- Elders are given by God, *“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.”*³ The Greek word for “equipping” means to mend, prepare, or complete. For us to be equipped by our elders requires that we submit to them. We are told to *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account”* to the Lord (Hebrews 13:17).
- Elders are to equip our congregation, *“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”*

It is important to understand the role that elders are to play in our lives. The elders are to equip us for the work of ministry until we become mature believers, having the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.⁴

2. **We are to speak truth in love to one another, resulting in spiritual growth (vs. 14-15)**

Ephesians 4:14-15 explains what happens when we are being equipped by the elders for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. The Apostle writes, *“¹⁴As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,”* Spiritually young believers are susceptible to false doctrine, the trickery of men, and craftiness in deceitful scheming. Yet, as we learn to speak *“truth in love”* to one another, it results in each of us growing up in all aspects into Christ, who is the head of the body.

¹ The terms “member” and “members” are used to describe a believer being placed in the body of Christ at salvation (1 Corinthians 12:13), and how the believer is to use his spiritual gift in the local church (1 Corinthians 12:14-31; Romans 12:4-5). Instead of being called “members” of a local church, the believers’ association with a congregation is described as the body of Christ in various local churches. Examples include, *“the church of God which is at Corinth”* (1 Corinthians 1:2), *“the beloved of God in Rome”* (Romans 1:7), *“the saints in Christ who are at Philippi”* (Philippians 1:1), and *“the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae”* (Colossians 1:2).

² The phrase *“pastor and teachers”* denotes one group of individuals. The Greek word for *“pastor”* literally means “shepherd.” The phrase *“pastor and teachers”* is better translated “shepherd-teachers.” Since only elders are instructed to shepherd their congregation (Acts 2:28; 1 Peter 5:2), and one of their qualifications include being *“able to teach”* (1 Timothy 3:2), the phrase *“pastor and teachers”* refers to elders within the local church. For further discussion, see the paper entitled, “Biblical Leadership and the Local Church.”

³ In this context, the *“body of Christ”* is a metaphor used to describe all believers on earth, commonly referred to as the universal church. For a further discussion about how the universal church finds its structure and leadership within local churches, please see the paper entitled Biblical Leadership and the Local Church.”

⁴ For further discussion about the biblical role of elders, please see the paper entitled “Biblical Leadership and the Local Church.”

Truth is to play a foundational role in our relationships with one another at TVBC. God's Word is truth (John 17:17; 2 Timothy 2:15). In the last night with His disciples, Jesus often spoke of truth. He described Himself as, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). Later, when describing the Holy Spirit, He said, *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth"* (John 16:13). While praying to the Father, Jesus said, *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth"* (John 17:17). In Ephesians 4:24-25, The Apostle Paul wrote what happens when we are renewed in the spirit of our mind. He writes *"Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another."*

Love is to play an equally important role in our lives. The Apostle John wrote, *"Beloved let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God"* (1 John 4:7). The Apostle Paul wrote, *"the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us"* (Romans 5:5). In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Speaking *"truth in love"* is to play a vital role in our own spiritual growth and the growth of the body of Christ at TVBC. As we speak truth in love to one another, *"we grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ."*

3. **We are to play an active role in the building up of one another in love (v. 16)**

In Ephesians 4:16, Paul writes, *"from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."* Each of us play an important role in the body. Just as our human bodies are *"fitted and held together by what every joint supplies,"* God wants to use each of us in joining and holding together the body at TVBC. As each of us prayerfully follows Christ, it causes *"the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."*

Conclusion:

Becoming part of TVBC is not based upon the completion of a membership class or the signing of membership papers. Being part of Treasure Valley Bible Church is based upon a believer in Jesus Christ regularly attending TVBC, and should involve being actively involved in our congregation.

God desires each of us to be actively involved in our congregation. This involvement includes being equipped by the elders for the work of service, speaking truth in love to one another, and using our giftedness in the building up of our congregation in love.

For those who are visiting TVBC, we recognize that choosing a church to regularly attend and be actively involved in is a very important decision. To help assist you in this prayerful decision, we have provided several resources:

- On the last Sunday of each month, we provide an opportunity for visitors to meet and talk with the elders after the service. The elders are also available by appointment.
- We have created "Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives" papers to express our understanding of what the Bible says on key doctrinal issues.
- We offer a Discovery class to answer further questions you may have about our church and Bible doctrines, and provide opportunity to make new friendships.
- We suggest that you attend one of our Sunday school classes to further understand the teachings of our church and enjoy the fellowship of our congregation.

"Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives" papers represent an overview of various Bible doctrines. Each paper contains biblical truths that often set TVBC apart from other churches and religious organizations. We invite the congregation's biblically based feedback as we seek to accurately handle the Word of God.