

DISCOVER RETTA

Session 101: Covenant Membership

Introduction: Why Are You Here?

If you are reading this, then welcome to the beginning of what we hope will be a beautiful and fulfilling journey. The following course was designed by the leadership of Retta Baptist Church to allow you to get to know us as a church (our story, our passion, our heart), and to help you discover what it means to be a member of our family. Please understand, we have no desire whatsoever to place any kind of obstacle between you and becoming a member of this church. We do, however, desire that membership at Retta be based on a well-informed, Spirit-led decision to join us in our mission to make Jesus famous.

So, if you're ready, let's begin answering a few very important questions:

Gospel - What's All of This About?

At the heart of everything we do here at Retta is something called **the gospel**. Literally translated from its original language in the Bible, the word **gospel** means "good news." We will expand more on these beliefs later, but at its most basic level, the **gospel** is this:

- I. God is holy, and his standard is perfection. (Exodus 15:11, Deut. 32:4, Isaiah 6:3, Matt. 5:48, Rom 2:6-8)
- II. Man is sinful, and the penalty for sin is death. (Gen. 3:6-7, Isaiah 64:6, Rom. 3:23, 6:23, 1 Cor. 15:22)
- III. Jesus is Savior, the perfect sacrifice for our sins. (Gen. 3:15, Isa. 53:5, John 3:16, 10:17-18, Rom. 5:8)
- IV. Salvation happens when we place our trust in Jesus alone to save us. (John 1:12, 14:6, Acts 4:12, Rom. 10:13)

Church – Who Are We?

The Bible uses the Greek word *ekklesia*, which we translate into English as "church," to describe two different types of people:

1. The Universal Church – all believers in all times and all places - we become a part of this group the moment we believe the gospel and trust in Christ alone to save us.
2. The Local Church – specific believers in a specific time and specific place - we become a part of this group when we commit ourselves to the other believers in the church, becoming part of a family.

In his Word, God expresses his desire and design for all members of the Universal Church to also become members of a local church. (Ephesians 4: 12-16, Acts 2: 42-47, 1 Cor. 12: 12-27)

History – Where Have We Been?

From our first recorded meeting under a brush arbor on September 12, 1914 to the celebration of 100 years of ministry in September 2014, Retta Baptist Church has remained a consistent and vital part of our local community, providing a place of hope and comfort for our neighbors, and shining the light of the gospel into the world around us. The following are a few highlights from Retta's history:

1914 – Established as Retta Missionary Baptist Church

1938 – Began holding weekly services

1946 – First Vacation Bible School

1947 – Housed Tarver-Rendon Elementary when their school building burned

1983 – Opened SonShine Patch Daycare (now Retta Christian Learning Center)

1986-1987 – Recognized as the fastest growing Sunday School in the SBC

2013 – Released "MY SON," a feature film designed to share the gospel through visual media

2014 – Began renovating our existing ministry spaces (without going into any debt whatsoever) to better reach our changing community

Mission – Where Are We Going?

Two passages in Scripture clearly outline the **mission** of the Church as a whole, and Retta Baptist Church in particular:

The Great Commandment

"And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matt. 22:35-40 (ESV)

The Great Commission

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matt. 28:18-20

Simply put, the **mission** of Retta Baptist Church is to carry out the **Great Commission** of sharing the gospel and making disciples by living out the **Great Commandment** in our daily lives.

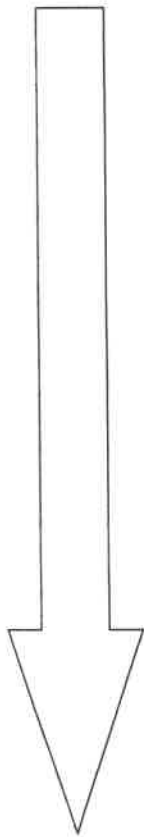
Vision & Values – How Will We Get There?

To accomplish our **mission** in the specific place, time, and culture in which we live, Retta has developed the following **vision** statement:

“Retta Baptist Church exists to bring glory to God (**Great Commandment**) by making disciples of Jesus (**Great Commission**) Christ through passionate **worship**, authentic **community**, sacrificial **service**, and gospel-driven **mission**.

This **vision** statement lays out how Retta intends to carry out its **mission** by integrating four core **values** in the life of our church. The following chart illustrates these **values** in a little more detail:

Great Commandment



Great Commission

Passionate Worship

As we fall more in love with Jesus, we are driven to worship Him privately and corporately. We do this through singing, prayer, studying Scripture, and listening to the Word preached.

Authentic Community

As we spend time together in worship and in community, we build relationships with one another, encouraging and building each other up in faith. As our relationships deepen, we begin to “sharpen” one another in the faith, teaching and showing one another what it looks like to walk with Christ.

Sacrificial Service

As our relationships and our faith deepen, we begin to see the needs of others as more important than our own, and are driven in love to meet those needs. This includes the needs of those inside and outside the church, whether physical, financial, emotional or spiritual.

Gospel-Driven Mission

As we see God move in these other three areas of our lives, we cannot help but be driven to share the message of God’s redemptive plan in Christ with those in our community and around the world. We accomplish this through ongoing local outreach, as well as short- or long-term mission trips at the state, national, and international level.

Doctrine and Distinctives: What Do We Believe?

We have chosen to divide this section into two parts on purpose. The first section (**Doctrine**) is made up of those beliefs that we as a church hold as **primary**, meaning that they are foundational biblical truths in which there is no room for debate or disagreement. The second section (**Distinctives**) are those beliefs that we hold as **secondary**, meaning that, while we believe them to be biblical and important, we also understand that not all Christians will do likewise.

Doctrine

God - There is one and only one God. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer of the universe. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, intelligent, spiritual, and personal. He has revealed himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the mystery we call the Trinity.

The Father - God the Father reigns over all Creation throughout all time. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfect in love, in justice and in mercy. Nothing takes place outside of his perfect will for his Creation.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, and the central figure of all Scripture and history. He became a man, Jesus of Nazareth: born of a virgin, fully human but without sin, the perfect example of obedience and the character of God. He paid completely for the sin of mankind by his sacrificial death on a cross, then rose from the dead after three days. He now resides in Heaven and in the heart of everyone who believes in Him as the perfect Mediator between God and man, and will return someday as Lord and Judge to complete this age of history.

The Holy Spirit is the fully divine Spirit of God, the third person of the Trinity. He inspired the writing of the Bible, the Word of God. He draws people to Christ, brings about their salvation through Christ, and points their worship toward Christ. He resides in every believer in Christ as a seal of their salvation, and brings about the will of God in their lives.

The Bible is the divinely inspired, completely true, and faithfully communicated Word of God. It reveals to us what God is like, his plan for humanity and the standards by which we are judged. It reveals the truth and character of Christ, and assists humanity in coming to a saving knowledge of Him. It has remained true and inerrant throughout the translation process over thousands of years.

Humanity is created in the image of God and designed for relationship with Him. Because all people are created in God's image, all life is sacred, and should be valued and protected. The first humans freely chose to disobey God, and all of mankind is now separated from God by our disobedience. Because of this separation, we are unable to do anything on our own to repair our brokenness or avoid the penalty for our disobedience.

Salvation is the free gift of God to anyone who will receive it. We receive salvation when we turn away from our own way of living, and fully embrace Christ and what He has done to save us. There is no other way to be saved apart from Jesus Christ.

The Church is the body of Christ (not a building or organization), made up of believers in Christ to carry out His work on earth. It exists for two primary purposes: to worship God and to share the gospel with the world.

Eternity - Humans are eternal beings, created by God to exist forever. Where we spend eternity depends on our relationship with Christ. Those who know Christ as their Savior will spend eternity with God in a place called Heaven. Those who do not know Christ will spend eternity separated from God in a place called Hell.

Distinctives

Eternal Security for the Believer

Since salvation is a free gift from God and is not accomplished by any human action, there is nothing that true believers in Jesus can do to forfeit their salvation.

Believer's Baptism

The biblical practice of baptism by immersion is for believers who have made a profession of faith in Christ, and is symbolic of His death, burial, resurrection. While baptism is not necessary for salvation, we believe that each believer should be baptized as a public declaration of Christ's work in their hearts.

The Lord's Supper

The taking of the bread and the cup as modeled by Jesus in His last meal with His disciples is another symbol of Christ's work in our lives. The elements used represent the body and blood of Christ, given as a sacrifice for our sins on the Cross, but neither is actually the physical body or blood of Jesus. According to Scripture, the Lord's Supper is to be taken in remembrance of Jesus by believers, and in no way confers salvation.

Priesthood of Every Believer

Since all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we all have equal access to God. We do not need any other mediator (priest, pastor, etc.) other than Christ to go before the Father on our behalf.

Congregational Church Leadership

Led by the pastor and other qualified church leaders, each member has equal voting rights in the decision-making process of the church, which are worked out through an organization of committees and ministry teams and finalized in church-wide business meetings.

Church Autonomy and Cooperation

Each local church body is independently governed under the leadership of Christ. While we cooperate with other churches of like faith and practice through organizations like the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention and Baptist General Convention of Texas, neither of these bodies has the ability to make staff, budget or ministry decisions on behalf of our church or any other church.

Religious Freedom

While we believe that Christians can and should be involved in the political process, we also affirm the words of the First Amendment to the Constitution, which provide protection for the Church from political or legal interference by our government.

Membership pt. 1 – What Should You Expect?

Now that you know a little more about who Retta is and how we operate, you might be wondering: "So, what happens if I decide to join here?" As a member of Retta Baptist Church, you should have the following expectations:

1. You will be loved. (John 13: 34-35, 1 John 4:7)
2. You will be disciplined. (Proverbs 27:17, Matthew 28:19-20)
3. You will be taught the Bible. (2 Cor. 3:16, Hebrews 4:12)
4. You will be part of a family. (1 Tim. 5: 1-2, John 17: 20-23)
5. You will be held accountable. (Galatians 6: 1-5, Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12)

Membership pt. 2 – What Is Expected of You?

As in any organization, from a family to a university to a corporation, being a part of the group is always a two-way street. If you decide to become a member of Retta, your fellow members and the leadership of the church will hold the following expectations of you:

1. You are expected to attend regularly. (Hebrews 10:25, Colossians 3:16)
2. You are expected to be part of a small group. (Acts 2: 42-46, 5:42, 2 Corinthians 2:2)
3. You are expected to give (tithes) faithfully. (2 Corinthians 9:7, Malachi 3:10)
4. You are expected to serve the body and the community by using the gifts and talents God has given you. (Romans 12: 3-8, 1 Peter 4: 10-11)
5. You are expected to be accountable to Scripture by your fellow church members. (Matthew 18: 15-17, James 5: 19-20)

Membership pt. 3 – OK, Now What?

If Retta feels like a place you where you want to be a part, then the next obvious question is: **What does that look like?** Below are a few ways in which you can plug in to the life of our church. They are divided by how each of them contributes to the four core **values** of Retta. Many of these are covered in more detail in other membership classes, but here is a brief summary:

Passionate Worship

Worship Team
Welcome Team (Greeter, Usher, Etc.)
Audio/Visual/Media Team
Prayer Team

Children's Ministry
Student Ministry
Senior Adult Ministry
Hospitality Team

Authentic Community

Bible Fellowship (Sundays @ 9:30am)
LifeGroup (Sundays @ 6:00pm)
Wed. Night Bible Studies (Wed, 6:30pm)
Small Group Host Home, Leader/Co-Leader

Gospel-Driven Mission

Short-Term Mission Trips
Tarver-Rendon Elementary Ministry
Community Block Parties/Outreach Events
Harvest House/Burleson Pregnancy Aid Center/

Sacrificial Service

Retta Baptist Church Membership Covenant

I, _____, affirm the following:

- I have placed my trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation, and am thus eligible for church membership.
- I have completed the DISCOVER RETTA Membership Class, and understand the material contained within it.
- I unconditionally affirm the statements of faith found in the Doctrine section of the Membership Class, and understand the information contained in the Distinctives section. I will adhere to those beliefs held as Doctrine and will not be divisive over those held as Distinctives.
- I have prayerfully considered whether or not God would have me be a member of Retta Baptist Church.

And so, with the understanding that:

Retta Baptist Church Covenants...

- ...to love me.
- ...to disciple me.
- ...to teach me the Bible.
- ...to serve and protect me as a member of the Retta family.
- ...to hold me accountable under Christ to the commands of Scripture.

I Covenant...

- ...to attend Worship Services and other church gatherings regularly.
- ...to be an active part of a small group at Retta.
- ...to give generously and faithfully of my money and my time to help expand the Kingdom.
- ...to use my God-given gifts and talents to serve my fellow believers and my community.
- ...to be held accountable under Christ to the commands of Scripture by my fellow church members.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

DOB: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Marital Status: Single

Married

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

I would like to receive Retta' newsletter by:

Regular Mail

Email

Are you joining by:

Baptism? _____

Statement? _____

Letter? _____

If you are moving your membership to Retta by letter from another church, which one?

Check the area(s) of service that interest you:

Children's Ministry

Youth Ministry

Welcome Team

Senior Adult Ministry

Hospitality

Missions/Outreach

Media/Tech Team

Worship Team

Prayer Team

Small Group Leader

Safety/Emergency Response Team