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I Am A Church Member: Discovering The Attitude That Makes The Difference



Synopsis

Best-selling author and ministry leader Thom S. Rainer drew an exceptional response when he posted a 500-word declaration about church membership to his daily blog. "I Am a Church Member" started a conversation about the attitudes and responsibilities of church members -- rather than the functional and theological issues -- that previous new member primers all but ignored. Thoughtfully expanded to book form, *I Am a Church Member* begins to remedy the outbreak of inactive or barely committed church members, addressing without apology what is expected of those who join a body of believers. When a person's attitude is consistently biblical and healthy, matters of giving, serving, and so forth will fall into place more naturally. Six intentional chapters with study questions guide this rising discussion:

1. I Will Be a Unifying Church Member
2. I Will Not Let the Church Be About My Preferences and Desires
3. I Will Pray for My Church Leaders
4. I Will Lead My Family to Be Healthy Church Members
5. I Will Be a Functioning Member
6. I Will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift

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Customer Reviews

Many of us church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ, according to Thom Rainer in this book. We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, and to care for us; and we don't like the hypocrites in the church, but we fail to see our own hypocrisies. The book is a journey of rediscovering the privilege and joy of church membership, a journey through six pledges which are about the joy of being last instead of first, the joy of being a unifier rather than a complainer, the joy of being a servant rather than being entitled.

The six pledges are:^{*} To be a functioning member, giving cheerfully and abundantly, and serving without hesitation.^{*} To be a unifying church member, avoiding gossip and negative talk, and promoting forgiveness and unity.^{*} To avoid insisting on personal preferences and desires, and to put up with associated inconveniences.^{*} To pray for church leaders every day, including for protection and physical and mental health.^{*} To lead one's family to be healthy church members, worshipping together and praying together for the church.^{*} To treasure church membership as a gift, rather than treating it as a legalistic obligation.

The book is a very short one, at around 80 pages, easy to read and inexpensive. I found it quite inspiring, and by the end I was feeling eager to commit to a higher level of church membership. The problem with passivity in churches is usually diagnosed - probably correctly - as a leadership problem, but it is also a followership problem, and this book is a great way to open the eyes of ordinary believers to the importance of their role as fully participating members of the body.

This is the first book by Thom Rainer that I have read. In what I have discovered about him in general, but as a result of following his blog in particular, I have developed quite a bit of respect for him. His latest did not disappoint. Published on April 14, 2013, *I Am A Church Member* is available in Kindle e-book or hardcover versions and it is just under 100 pages long. I read the book in Kindle form in less than 2 hours. It is easy to read, digest and sensitively but unashamedly addresses issues like gossip, a "what's in it for me" mindset, worship wars and more. Rainer asks the reader to consider what he believes is a biblical attitude of church membership and how that differs from the culture's definition of membership. Unlike other books of this type, Rainer doesn't ignore Scripture but brings them forth alongside research and experience to offer a compelling description of what a church member is and should be and the difference that would make in our churches and thus in the culture as a whole. The pledges he ends each chapter with and includes in the back are a great reminder of what has been learned so that the reader can put them into action. In addition, each chapter ends with questions pertinent to that chapter's content. With enthusiasm, I recommend *I Am A Church Member*. Useful for personal enrichment as well as a group Bible study or even as a resource for a pastor in discussing these important issues with the board or a small group or church setting, I am sure that if you purchase it, it will not go to waste. It is a must read for every church member. This review also appears at:

<http://beacon2light.blogspot.com/2013/05/review-of-i-am-church-member-by-thom.html>

This book (presentation) reminded me of when I was a kid/teen and I heard various pastors

emphasize the importance and necessity of wives submitting to their husbands. What about husbands loving their wives like Christ loved the Church? Yeah, yeah, a token remark was offered from time to time, but the clear emphasis was always on the wives. Similarly, this book was just too imbalanced for me to derive much benefit from it. As a pastor myself, I would be embarrassed to give this book to the members of our church. As I listened to the book, I kept thinking, but what about the responsibilities of the pastors? What if he's an incapable and/or insensitive pastor (for whatever reason)? I realize I'm likely in the minority, but those are my observations. UPDATE: As an excellent alternative, I do recommend Joshua Harris' book, WHY CHURCH MATTERS. I liked this book so much that I purchased 50 overstock copies (elsewhere) in order to give to every family in our church! http://smile..com/Why-Church-Matters-Discovering-Family/dp/1601423845/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1425924298&sr=8-1&keywords=why+church+matters

I really wasn't impressed by this. I think the concept was a good one, but I don't like the way it was done. While he doesn't explicitly say that people should blindly go along with whatever is going on in their church, that is easily the message people could come away with from this book. In a perfect world, that would be safe to do, but this is anything but a perfect world. I think if you're going to be a church member, you should support one another and the church leadership, but you should never, ever abandon your own judgment. I've seen a lot of damage done when this occurs in real life. I agree with some point in the book, namely that people should be aware of what many pastors deal with in their positions, and that they should not be petty and demand their way all the time. Still, the back your church no matter what outlook disturbs me.

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