

# How to Raise Expectations Through A Membership Class

Written by Dan Garland

Raising expectations begins by clearly communicating the expectations associated with the discipleship process of your church. Certainly, the leadership of the church plays a major role in the information they communicate and the manner in which they communicate expectations.

**The first step** begins with developing a **clear, easily explained, and communicated mission / purpose statement.**

The mission statement needs to contain both the purpose of the church and a clearly defined discipleship process. For guidance on doing this, see [Essential Church? Reclaiming a Generation of Dropouts](#) by Thom Rainer and Sam Rainer.

**The second step** is to **communicate this mission statement to all the membership.**

This can be done through a series of sermons supported by church-wide communication of the mission / purpose statement through the mail outs, website, church signs, etc. Get the word out about your mission / purpose.

**The third step** is to **develop a membership classes for all new members.**

These classes are not always for new or prospective members. They should be made available for those who simply have an interest in the church. However, the focus of the class is essentially the same. Those who attend are introduced to:

## Membership Expectations

Church Leadership must share clear expectations through a membership class:

- Share the basic beliefs of the church
- Share the discipleship expectations by explaining your mission / purpose statement
- Explain why membership is important
- Encourage involvement in a ministry that matches spiritual giftedness
- Explain the importance of small group Bible Study Classes or Sunday School and encourage their involvement

- Explain why and how to support the church financially
- How to participate in the Great Commission and spread the Good News to friends and relatives

"The expectation part of the class lets those present know how they can become members of the church, and what is expected of members. It is that latter aspect that is critical in the essential church. Many of the dechurched today tell us that they never heard what was expected of them. They thus "fell through the cracks" without anyone noticing." ([Essential Church](#), p. 215)

### Intentional Relationships

New and prospective members are asking:

- Can I develop friends in this church?
- Where do I fit in?
- Am I needed?

Existing members must be taught and encouraged to take time to develop new friendships with new members. If a person cannot name at least six others as a friend in the first six months they are likely to drop out. Small groups or Sunday School must be one of the most important concerns of the church for its new members. Small Groups / Sunday School Involvement provides for:

- Relationships / Fellowship
- Accountability / ministry
- Bible Study / Discipleship
- Ministry Opportunities
- Prayer / Personal needs
- Understanding of what is going on in the church

### Ministry Involvement

- New Members should be asked to participate in some type of ministry within the first three months after they have joined the fellowship
- Every aspect of church life should point toward ministry involvement and getting people connected to life and mission of the church body

In the Membership Class discover:

- Where they have served before
- What they are good at doing
- What they like to do
- What is their interest or passion
- What is their willingness to serve

Provide list of ministries opportunities and ways to get involved.

A Membership Class will help you Inform, Interact, and Involve

### **1. Inform**

People look for a church that has a clear vision and a strong sense of mission. Their hesitancy to become involved often is overcome when a church has a clear, challenging, motivating mission. Communicating such things as the church's history, vision, goals, beliefs, and worship style helps newcomers understand your church.

### **2. Interact**

Relationship is the core of Christianity. Help participants build relationships with others in the class, within the congregation, and with Jesus Christ by creating an informal, warm, friendly atmosphere.

### **3. Involve**

Each person should be expected to become involved in an appropriate ministry role or task. By informing people about the ministries of the church and helping them find a place, we increase the chances of their staying.

See below for links to other practical articles including ideas for the format of your membership class.

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