

## Guiding Principles for the Membership Process at Immanuel Bible Church

Four core principles guide how we welcome, assess, and affirm those seeking to join our body.

### 1. Accessible, Yet Not Compromised

We seek to make the path to membership accessible without diluting the integrity of gospel truth and its bearing on church-membership. For example, while we do not require every testimony to resemble a theological treatise, we do expect each applicant to articulate a credible profession of faith rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we aim to distinguish between

- the objective *content* of the gospel (God's holiness and profound wrath towards sinners estranged; who Christ is and what He has accomplished; as well as the Spirit's work in regenerating and enabling sinners to exercise saving faith in Christ),
- the subjective reception of the gospel's *benefits* (forgiveness of sins, deliverance from hell, imputed righteousness of Christ), and
- the subjective *effects* of the gospel (progressive transformation in life and godliness).

### 2. Biblical, Yet Not Contrived

We strive to follow the Scriptures in our membership process without burdening it with artificial constructs. This involves

- distinguishing between what is prescriptive (explicitly commanded by Scripture), normative (practiced as a general pattern), and prudential (wise and flexible/contextualized).
- clarifying the difference between the *essence* of membership (a covenantal belonging to the body, and "submission" to the elders) and its *functions* (e.g., serving and voting)

### 3. Cohesive, Yet Not Contingent

Our membership pathway is intentionally cohesive but does not require rigid linearity. For instance, individuals preparing for baptism are encouraged to concurrently attend membership classes, complete the membership application, as well as interview with the elders prior to baptism—so long as they do intend to be baptized and understand its biblical relationship to church membership.

### 4. Deliberate, Yet Not Coerced

We want every step of the process to be meaningful, not mechanical. Our aim is not to *form* unified relationships borne by the Spirit, but to help *facilitate* it. Moreover, by such a process we do not aim towards numerical growth, but towards *meaningful membership*—a body of believers who understand and embrace the covenantal nature of life together in Christ.