

“I AM A CHURCH MEMBER”  
(Thom S. Rainer)

This is a short but an extremely helpful book. The author has tapped into the challenge that every church is facing today; overcoming a declining attendance and membership. Every believer must see his or her church membership as an honor, privilege, and joy.

In fact, I thought it was so helpful that I purchased enough copies to give one to every family in our church. As I preached through a series on the church recently, I took one Sunday morning to discuss the role of church members and gave them this book. Several of our members have indicated that they have enjoyed working through the book and have been challenged greatly.

Rainer’s introduction is entitled, “A Tale of Two Church Members,” and focuses on two very different perspectives on church membership. He wrote:

*I am suggesting that congregations across America are weak because many of us church members have lost the biblical understanding of what it means to be a part of the body of Christ. We join our churches expecting others to serve us, to feed us, and to care for us. We don’t like the hypocrites in the church, but we fail to see our own hypocrisies. God did not give us local churches to become country clubs where membership means we have privileges and perks. He placed us in churches to serve, to care for others, to pray for leaders, to learn, to teach, to give, and, in some cases, to die for the sake of the gospel.*

The book is divided into six chapters with each title declaring something about the type of church member we should be.

## **Chapter 1: “I Will Be a Functioning Church Member”**

This chapter focuses on the responsibility of church members to be active in using their spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ. Rainer wrote: *With a country club membership you pay others to do the work for you. With church membership, everyone has a role or function. That is why some are hands, feet, ears, or eyes. We are all different, but we are necessary parts of the whole.*

Every member is vital to the body of Christ and when all members are not using their gifts in the body the church suffers! Rainer offered a very helpful question that church members can ask themselves, “How can I best serve my church?”

## **Chapter 2: “I Will Be a Unifying Church Member”**

Rainer opens up with a powerful statement that I believe many people forget: “The world will know if we are Christians or not by the way we who are believers act toward one another.” Many of us have been involved in churches where there was little to no unity but that should not be the case. Rainer indicated that one of the most damaging things to church unity is gossip within the church. Church members have a responsibility to fight for (no pun intended) church unity at all times.

## **Chapter 3: “I Will Not Let My Church Be about My Preferences and Desires”**

This chapter is probably the most important in my estimation. We live in a church culture that is predominately “me” focused. The problem according to Rainer is that church members should relinquish their wants and preferences as soon as they join their local church. He wrote: *But the strange thing about church membership is that you actually give up your preferences when you join. Don’t get me wrong; there may be much about your church that you like a lot. But you are there to meet the needs*

*of others. You are there to serve others. You are there to give. You are there to sacrifice.*

Serving others is what Jesus did and what he calls us to do within the church.

#### **Chapter 4: “I Will Pray for My Church Leaders”**

Rainer’s challenge to church members in this chapter was encouraging to my soul. He emphasized the need for church members to pray for their leaders, specifically pastors. His reasoning is very clear:

*We should not be surprised, then, when we hear about a pastor’s moral failure. We are grieved and heartbroken, but not surprised. The devil is setting traps for pastors – anything he can do to bring harm to the pastor’s reputation. He will stop at nothing – greed, adultery, anger, addiction – to catch the pastor in his trap.*

He emphasizes that God works through the prayers of believers – pastors need all the prayers they can get. My hope is that more church members will diligently pray for their pastors and leaders!

#### **Chapter 5: “I Will Lead My Family to Be Healthy Church Members”**

This chapter focuses on the necessity for families to pray for the church, worship together in the church, and develop a love for the church. Rainer offered this helpful thought:

*As I grow more deeply in love with my church, I will do all I can in God’s power to bring my family with me. We will pray for our church leaders together. We will worship together. And we will serve together.*

We desperately need more families who love the church and who worship, serve, and pray for the church!

#### **Chapter 6: “I Will Treasure Church Membership as a Gift”**

The book ends with a chapter that focuses on the need to see church membership as a precious gift. Rainer wrote:

*Church membership is a gift. A gift must be treasured. It should not be taken for granted or considered lightly. Because it is a gift, we must always be thankful for it. And when we are thankful for something, we have less time and energy to be negative.*

We need more church members who are grateful for the gift of the local church and membership within the body!

\*\*If you are a church member, you need to pick up this book and read it! If you are a pastor you need to read it and get it in the hands of your people!