



Sermon Discussion Guide for Groups

The Gift of Membership

Preached by Daniel Grothe

September 6, 2026

Summary

Have someone in your group read the following summary aloud.

In this sermon, Pastor Daniel explored "the gift of membership" within the body of Christ, drawing from Romans 12. He opened with a story about his great-grandfather, a Greek immigrant who took in a German stranger named Fritz in the 1930s, illustrating how the family of God is meant to reach beyond biological bloodlines. He preached that the aim of God in salvation has always been the creation of a people who carry the life and power of God into a decaying world.

Pastor Daniel outlined three key benefits of membership in the body of Christ: Belonging – in a culture of "duty-free" relationships and growing loneliness, the church offers a place where people are truly known and cared for. Purpose – each member has unique gifts and skills that, when offered to the community, cast out darkness and serve those in need. Formation – just as a seasoned mentor shapes a younger learner, the community of faith forms us into the likeness of Jesus over time. He challenged the congregation to reject American

isolationism and embrace a duty-bound commitment to one another as members of one body.

Key Passages

- Romans 12:1-2
- Romans 12:4-5
- Romans 12:6-8
- Romans 12:13
- Romans 12:21

Opening Prayer

Open your session in prayer, using the words below or your own

Heavenly Father, we come before you today as a group of people who want to know you more deeply and love each other more fully. We ask that you open our hearts and minds to what you want to speak to us today. Where we have grown comfortable with isolation or shallow relationships, soften us. Where we have held back our gifts, stir us. May your Spirit guide our conversation, and may we leave today more committed to one another and to you. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

Getting Going

Allow time for each member to answer the following questions before moving on.

What is one skill, hobby, or passion that you have that most people in this group probably do not know about?

Discussion Questions

Answer as many of these questions as time and interest allow.

1. Pastor Daniel said that 'the aim of God in salvation has always been the creation of a people.' What does it mean to you that God's goal was not just to save individuals, but to create a community?
2. The sermon described a shift from 'duty-bound' relationships to 'duty-free' relationships in our culture. Where do you see this shift showing up in your own life or in the lives of people around you?
3. Mother Teresa observed that the greatest poverty of the Western world is loneliness. Do you agree with that assessment? Why or why not?
4. The story of Fritz, the German immigrant who was taken in by a stranger and became family, illustrates what it looks like to welcome an outsider. Who in your life right now might need that kind of welcome, and what would it look like for you to offer it?
5. Romans 12 lists a variety of spiritual gifts and calls each person to use them actively. Which gift or gifts do you believe God has placed in you, and are you currently using them to serve others?

6. Pastor Daniel described formation as learning virtue through imitation, by watching and being shaped by people who are further along in faith. Who has been a 'Moto Joe' in your spiritual life, and how did they shape you?
7. The sermon challenged us to reject American isolationism and commit to being 'duty-bound' in our relationships. What is one step you could take this week to move from a duty-free posture to a duty-bound one?
8. Pastor Daniel said, 'The most compelling thing we offer the world is our rich, compelling life together.' Do you think the church you are part of is currently offering that to the world around it? What would need to change for that to be true?

Making It Personal

Take the opportunity noted below to apply this week's sermon to your everyday life.

This week, identify one person in your church community or neighborhood who may be experiencing loneliness or a lack of belonging. Reach out to them in a tangible way, whether that is a phone call, a meal, an invitation, or simply showing up. Also, take a few minutes to write down one gift, skill, or resource you have that you could offer to serve others in your community. Bring that idea back to the group next time and share how it went.

Key Takeaways

Commit to memory one point from the message before dismissing.

- The aim of God in salvation is the creation of a people, not just the saving of individuals. God has always intended for his followers to carry His life and power into the world together as a community.
- The first benefit of membership in the body of Christ is belonging. In a culture of duty-free and shallow relationships, the church offers a place where people are truly known, cared for, and no longer alone.
- The second benefit of membership is purpose. When each member uses their unique gifts and skills in service to others, the body of Christ actively pushes back darkness and meets real needs in the community.
- The third benefit of membership is formation. We grow to look more like Jesus not primarily through information alone, but through imitation and life lived alongside others who are further along in faith.
- Membership in the body of Christ requires a deliberate, duty-bound commitment to one another. In an a la carte society, followers of Jesus are called to resist isolation and sign up for the ancient, life-giving way of genuine community.

Closing Prayer

Have someone from your group close your time in prayer, using the words below or your own.

Lord, thank you for this time together and for the truth of your word. You have called us not to walk this road alone, but to belong to one another as members of one body. Forgive us for the times we have chosen comfort over commitment, or isolation over community. Give us the courage to show up for each other, to use what you have placed in us for the good of others, and to allow ourselves to be shaped and formed by the people you have placed around us. May we leave here today more willing to be duty-bound in our love for one another, and may our life together be a compelling witness to a lonely world. We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**