

UNPACKING THE CHURCH:

CLEARING UP CONFUSION

UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES US AND WHAT BINDS US

What is the Nature of Our Relationships?

1. We are in “bound” relationships with God and each other.

John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17

2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 4:25

2. Relationships that formally bind people in some way are either contractual or covenantal.

Contract vs. Covenant

- Contracts generally involve the exchange of goods or services and are negotiated.
 - *Covenants involve the exchange of the individuals themselves and are initiated.*
- Contracts bind legally.
 - *Covenants bind relationally.*
- Contracts include stipulations that when broken free the other party from obligation.
 - *Covenants include stipulations that when broken do not sever the relationship but require the pursuit of reconciliation (which may include restitution).*
- Compliance with the terms of a contract is guaranteed by threat of penalty (damages).
 - *Compliance with the terms of a covenant is guaranteed by personal integrity.*
- Contracts are established upon legalities.
 - *Covenants are established upon loyalty.*
- Contracts are generally temporary.
 - *Covenants are permanent.*
- Contracts are generally entered into with a signature.
 - *Covenants are confirmed by signs..*

Americans tend to think contractually; how does this affect our relationships?

3. Our relationship with God is covenantal.

God has always related to His people through covenants (Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, etc.).

God’s relationship to the church is by way of the “new covenant.”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 vs. Hebrews 8:8-13 and 9:15

(cf. Luke 22:20; 2 Cor. 3:6)

The essence of eternal life is intimate relationship with God (John 17:3).

What are some key differences between the old and new covenants?

4. Our relationship with each other is covenantal.

We are all children of God and are bound together by virtue of our shared relationship to Christ.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Peter 2:9-10; 1 John 3:1-10

We are bound by our new nature and by our shared identity as a people of God.

If we are bound to one another by covenant, how ought this shape our relationships with each other?
[Note the differences between contracts and covenants.]

What are the Signs of the New Covenant?

1. Baptism is the first sign of the new covenant.

It is the outward sign of repentance and faith.

Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21

It signifies our union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12

It signifies our “immersion” into the body of Christ, the church.

Acts 2:41; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:11-12

If baptism signifies membership in the body of Christ, who should be baptized?

2. Communion is an ongoing sign of the new covenant.

Luke 22:20

Jesus used bread and wine to signify covenant commitment

1 Corinthians 10:1-3ff

Paul refers to both signs of the covenant. Paul connects our baptism with the “baptism” of the Israelites into the cloud and sea, and he connects communion with their spiritual food and drink.

1 Corinthians 11:23-32

Communion continues to remind us of the covenant and of our commitment to it.

1 Corinthians 11:17-22 and 33-34

Note that Paul grounds his rebuke (“for” in v 23 and “so then” in v 33) in the **meaning** of communion.

If communion is a remembrance of our new covenant relationships and commitments, who should participate in communion?