

We Are Members of One Another!

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Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor 5:18-21)

God wants man to be reconciled to Him. Since Adam and Eve found themselves banned from the garden of Eden after committing sin—man has been separated from God by sin. Those in sin face the reality of it's consequence: eternal death. (Rom. 6:23) God sent Jesus, His Son, to die in man's place (John 3:16) and we can be saved through His blood! (1 Pet. 1:18-21) Perhaps you have realized the seriousness of sin in your life and have had your sins washed away through the waters of baptism (Acts 22:16; 8:35-38). Isn't it great to have the burden of sin released? But, is this all there is to Christianity? Certainly not!

After baptism, the new Christian has an obligation to place membership with a local congregation of Christians and to become involved in the work of God. Consider the example of Saul. Immediately after becoming a Christian he sought to join himself to the congregation at Jerusalem. (Acts 9:26-30) They were afraid of him (who wouldn't be after persecuting so many Christians in the years leading up to this,) and it was only after Barnabas went to the apostles with Saul and explained his conversion along with his subsequent preaching that the brethren considered him a member of that church. New Christians must follow in this pattern by placing membership with a group of likeminded Christians who are worshipping as closely to the New Testament pattern as possible. But,....

Placing membership is more than simply being affiliated with a congregation. Just filling a pew on Sunday morning and occasionally making it to Bible class is not all there is to being part of a congregation. Membership is more than just going to church at the same place every week. **It requires getting involved in the Lord's work going on among the Christians within the local church.** It includes contributing to the family relationship among brethren. Finally, membership demands sacrifice on an individual basis so that the goals of the church may be realized. What does God expect of each member of each local congregation?

God expects Christians to be together as much as possible. How often does God expect Christians to assemble together? The example in Scripture ranges from daily to every Lord's day. In attempting to answer this question Gene Rogers has written: *How much growth does one need? How much strengthening does one's faith require? How much fellowship does life demand? How much love for Christ does one want to demonstrate? How often does one need to be spurred and incited to noble living? (Growing in Christ, p. 54)* The honest answers to these questions will enable one to decide for himself how often he needs to assemble as a Christian.

There will be times when one cannot make an assembly because of work or sickness, etc. A member who cares about his family of brothers/sisters in Christ will have the courtesy to call and let someone know where he is. It can be distressing to come to worship service and not know why someone is absent.

God expects Christians to support the local work financially. New Christians are confronted with the question: *How much shall I give?* Americans are the richest people on earth. Even those considered poor in this country are far better off than the poor in foreign countries. God blesses much, but many fail to demonstrate their appreciation to Him through giving. Some fail to increase their giving, while others never start because they feel that an additional expense cannot be crammed into an already over-packed budget. Remember, **God calls upon us to give as an act of faith, and doing so is an expression of our obedience.** Congregations suffer when a few members fail to do their part in this area. Evangelistic outreach has to be scaled back, teaching material cannot be ordered, and cost cutting measures have to be employed. Remember what Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 9:6-7: *He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* When you make a decision to be faithful to God in giving Him what you know He would have you to give, peace will flood your heart with the knowledge that you have acted in obedience to His will. (Growing in Christ, p. 116)

God expects you to be part of the family! Get to know the brothers and sisters within the congregation. Within are some of the finest persons on earth! *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.* (Rom. 12:10) Have someone in your home! Invite a brother/sister out to lunch. Do fun things with your brethren. You can be part of the family by helping teach a Bible class; assist in personal work; or visit a needy Christian in their home. Make a commitment to grow closer to people of like precious faith.

God expects more than just being baptized and going to church. He wants YOU to do more than just fill a pew and then go back home and forget about being part of His church and His family of believers. Service must become a priority! Where are your priorities? Are you fulfilling YOUR God-given responsibilities?

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