

The Responsibilities of Church Membership

Romans 12:1-13

HOW DO WE SUPPORT THE CHURCH IN ITS WORSHIP AND WORK?

1. By prioritizing weekly corporate worship in our life. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Heb 10:24-25

- Church attendance as a way of life is non-negotiable for Christians.
- God Himself (not the Pastor or Elders) summons you to worship Him. Psalm 50:1-5; 36:7-9; Ex 20:8-11
- Showing up ready to engage—with God, with your own life, with others.

2. By using our gifts to serve the mission of the church. Romans 12:1-8; 1 Cor 12:1-31; 1 Peter 4:10

- God has given each believer spiritual gifts—use them “inside” or “outside” the church building.
- 1 Peter 4:10: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.*

3. By being other-centered and considering the needs of those around us.

- Romans 15:1-2: *We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.*
- By warmly greeting and welcoming those you don't know.
- By inviting guests to your home for a meal—or to your small group/community group.
- By inviting unbelievers to attend with you.
- At a church our size, it is easy to become passive. ‘Someone else’ will do that. Probably not!

4. By giving tithes and offerings.

- “God's tithes” (10% of gross income) and “our” offerings (anything above and beyond the tithe).
- The church does not have ‘membership fees’. There are no HOA, club fees, or special assessments.

HOW DO WE KEEP THE PEACE AND PURITY OF THE CHURCH?

1. By keeping “short accounts” and forgiving when you have been offended. Colossians 3:12-14: *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

- Practicing Matthew 18:15-17

2. By refusing to gossip. Ephesians 4:29: *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

- Prov. 16:28: *A perverse man spreads strife, and a gossip separates close friends.*
- Prov. 26:20: *For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no gossip, quarreling quiets down.*
- Prov. 6:16-19: *There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who declares lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.*

3. By holding the pastors and leadership accountable to the Bible.

...and communicating directly with questions, suggestions, concerns, and solutions.

HOW DO WE SUBMIT OURSELVES TO THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH?

- Hebrews 13:17: *Obey your leaders and submit to them—for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account—so that they may do this with joy, not groaning; for this would be unhelpful for you.*

1. By growing in our own relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. By helping someone else grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

3. By attending congregational meetings.

4. By praying for the pastors, leadership and staff.

5. By listening to the guidance and requests of the leadership.

- At times there will be sensitive matters addressed by the elders and deacons.
→ Should members TRUST? Should leadership give TRANSPARENCY?
- At times there will be special requests – needs (serving, financial, etc.)
- Follow their direction and leadership...

2 Examples... Christian Education Classes

Learning Hymns together (teaching our Children the Hymns of the Faith)

Sins of Church Members—Written by John Flavel* (1628-1691)

1. The first and more general sin of church members is a neglect in their care and watchfulness, to prevent offending those who are outside the church. This is expressly forbidden in **Colossians 4:5**: *Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders.* By a careless disregard of this rule, we harden non-Christians in their sins, bring guilt upon ourselves, and reproach on the name and ways of God.
2. The second and more specific sin of some church members is idleness and neglect of their call to be responsible and contributing members of society, against the clear instruction in **2 Thessalonians 3:11-12**: *For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.* This sin brings poverty on themselves and scandal on religion.
3. The third sin is gossip and revealing secrets of families and individuals; from which much strife arises, which harms and quenches mutual love within the church body. This is expressly forbidden in **Leviticus 19:16**: *You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people.*
4. The fourth sin is a quickness to believe everything they hear in private conversations and to make quick judgments about others based on these conversations. This we should not do against even the least member of the church. **2 Corinthians 12:20**: *For I am afraid that perhaps when I come...there may be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances....* Much less against church officers. **1 Timothy 5:19**: *Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.* This strikes at the bond of peace.
5. The fifth sin is neglecting corporate worship, the preaching of God's Word, and participation in the Lord's Supper for minor reasons—which should only be missed out of absolute necessity. This is contrary to **Hebrews 10:25**: *Not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some.* Trivial reasons should not keep the Christian from attending the corporate worship of the church.
6. The sixth sin is a failure to be zealous and fully engaged in God's worship when they are gathered together—which is shown in slowness to praise and lethargy toward God's preached Word. This is contrary to **Psalms 122:1**: *I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'* This is different from the early days in your walk with the LORD when you were excited to gather and worship. **Galatians 4:15**: *Where then is that sense of blessedness you had?*
7. The seventh sin is irreverence and a lack of God-centered devotion when gathered together for His worship. This is contrary to **Psalms 89:7**: *God is greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all those who are around Him.* This is seen in how we dress (when we wear clothing which is immodest or which invites attention to ourselves). **Ecclesiastes 5:1**: *Guard your steps as you go the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools.*
8. The eighth sin of which many church members are guilty is their neglect of giving and receiving correction to each other. This is contrary to **Leviticus 19:17**: *You may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.* This is also against Christ's own teaching in **Matthew 18:15**: *If your brother sins, go and reprove him between you and him alone.* And in terms of receiving correction from other believers, see **Psalms 141:5**: *Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; it is oil upon the head. Do not let my head refuse it.*
9. The ninth sin is having inappropriate and scandalous disagreements among fellow believers, and by becoming public they are shamefully exposed to unbelievers. This is contrary to **1 Corinthians 6:5-6**: *I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?*
10. The tenth sin is, in their private thoughts and emotions, to center too much on their own concerns and cares. This is contrary to **Philippians 2:21**: *For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.* It is also contrary to Paul's own example found in **2 Corinthians 11:29**: *Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?*

* This version of Flavel's Sins and Duties of Church Members has been edited by Rev. Ken Aldrich (Date: March 31, 2004) to reflect contemporary English language common to evangelicals.