

Lesson 5

What Does it Mean to Be a Member of a Church?

When we look at the Scriptures and see what the church is to be and do, we see that it is a disciplined group. The focus of church discipline is often from the negative side. But church discipline is not a negative thing. Like the discipline of children, there is the positive aspects of teaching, training, and helping them to mature into adults. The same is true with church discipline. As believers we are “disciples” of Christ. Which means that we learn from Him and follow him. As a church we are to help each other grow to maturity, that is the discipline of the church in its positive form. When someone is a member of the church who has professed faith in Christ but shows an unrepentant pattern of not following the Lord, the Scripture requires that we remove that person from the membership of the church. This is for the good of the individual and the church.

- **The church is a group of baptized believers.**
This was pointed out in the beginning with the study on what the church is. But it is made up of those who have believed on the Lord and through a credible profession of faith are baptized into the membership of the church.
- **Each member has a responsibility to the Body**
 - Eph. 4:16-17a. (See I Cor. 12,)
 - Fitly joined- properly joined. Properly constituted.
 - Webster defines a constitution thus: The established form of government in a state, kingdom or country; a system of fundamental rules, principles and ordinances for the government of a state or nation. In free states, the constitution is paramount to the statutes or laws enacted by the legislature, limiting and controlling its power; and in the United States, the legislature is created, and its powers designated, by the constitution.
 - The idea being that a church, as a church, has certain requirements to join and for members. We see this in verses 17- the end of the book of Ephesians.
 - Compacted-covenanted. When someone joins the church, they do so covenanting with that body to perform their role for the edification of that body.
- **Each member’s responsibility is explained in the “One Another” passages of Scripture:**
 - Aid in protecting from defilement (Jn. 13:14)
 - Love one another (Jn. 15:17, See I Cor. 13)
 - Not to cause offence (Rom. 14:13)
 - Warn each other (Rom. 15:14)
 - Serve each other (Gal. 5:13)
 - Bear each other’s burdens (Gal. 6:2)
 - Put up with each other (Eph. 4:2)
 - Forgive (Eph. 4:32)
 - Remind each other of the Lord’s return (I Thess. 4:18)
 - Edify (I Thess. 5:11)
 - Encourage love and good works (Heb. 10:24)

- **The church is to be pure**
 - Eph. 5:23-33, 2 Cor. 11:2
 - This purity is maintained through keeping the ordinances (1 Cor. 11:1-2).
 1. Baptism- Keeps the church pure by:
 - a. Keeping the unconverted out (Acts 2:38)
 - b. Keeping false doctrine out (Col. 2:12, Tit. 2:10)
 - c. Ensuring dedication (Rom. 6:1-10)
 2. Lord's Supper- Keeps the church pure by:
 - a. Causing us to examine our walk and relationship to the body (1Cor. 11:28-33).
 - b. Proving the purity of its members (1 Cor. 5:6-11).
 - As a church we are to be growing up into him in all things, to be holy (Eph. 4:13-16, 1 Cor. 3:16-17).
 - We are to be of the same mind (1 Cor. 1:10).
- **The necessity of discipline is based on the principle of leaven.**
 - Leaven is a corruption; it causes decay and rot. In Scripture leaven pictures:
 - a. Hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1)
 - b. False doctrine (Mat. 16:11-12)
 - c. Malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8)
 - Old leaven is to be purged out that we may be a new lump (1 Cor. 5:7). This forms the basis of church discipline; it is purging out leaven that we may be new.
- **Discipline requires that, when there is no repentance, that we put such persons out of the church so it will remain pure.**
 - Matthew 18:15-19
 - Rom. 16:17-18
 - 1 Cor. 5:1-11
 - Eph. 5:1-5
 - 1 Thess. 5:14
 - 2 Thess. 3:14-15
 - Titus 3:10
- **Discipline is for:**
 - The good of the church, to keep the body and bride pure.
 - The good of the individual, that if he is not saved, he will get saved; and if he is saved, that he will get right with God.
- **Restoration is ALWAYS the goal** (2 Cor. 2:6-9, Gal. 6:1).