



Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church

Lesson 15: The Nature and Duties of Church Membership

INTRODUCTION

1. What are some ways that you depend on others in your daily life? _____

MAIN IDEA

The members of a local church are *interdependent*. We all need each other. No one should say that the church doesn't need them, and no one *can* say that they don't need other church members. As members of the church, we also have duties to fulfill. These duties are means by which we grow in godliness and help others to grow. In this lesson we will look at the nature and the duties of church membership.

I. The Nature of Membership

Sometimes people treat church membership as if it's just a formality: checking a box, putting your name on a list, and moving on. But the New Testament teaches that as members of the same church, we are members of a body, and we depend on one another just as much as a foot depends on an eye.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul begins discussing spiritual gifts, which the Corinthians had been using in selfish and self-serving ways. In the opening verses of the chapter Paul reminds them that all their different gifts are given by the same Spirit and for the common good (vv. 1–11).

1 Corinthians 12:12–27

1. What metaphor does Paul use to describe the church in this passage? _____

2. What does Paul say is true of each of us who are Christians (v. 13)? _____

3. What does Paul say is not true of the body (v. 14)? What does this mean for the church? _____

4. What do the "foot" and the "ear" say in verses 15 and 16? What emotion or attitude is this expressing? _____

5. What are the two main points in Paul’s response to what the “foot” and the “ear” say (vv. 17–20)? _____

6. What do the “eye” and the “head” say in verse 21? What attitude does this express? _____

7. What are the two main points in Paul’s response to what the “eye” and “head” say in verse 21 (vv. 22–25)? _____

8. What are the two goals of God’s arrangement of the members of the body that Paul mentions in verse 25? What is the example he gives in verse 26 to illustrate these things? _____

9. Are you ever tempted to think that you don’t need the church—or at least that you don’t need certain members of the church? How does Paul’s teaching in this passage confront that attitude? _____

II. The Duty of Each Member

“Duty” sounds like a bad word today, or at least an unpleasant one. And it’s true that some duties are unpleasant, or frustrating, or seemingly pointless. In previous generations, Christians have often drawn up lists of their duties as church members, both toward their leaders and toward each other. That’s what we’re going to do in this section. We can’t look at everything the New Testament teaches about our duties as church members, but we can cover some of the main points in three key passages.

Duties from Hebrews 13:7, 17:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Duties from Hebrews 10:24–25:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Duties from Romans 12:3–18:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Small Group Discussion Questions:

Read Hebrews 13:7, 17.

1. What are some ways that you already imitate your church leaders' way of life (Heb. 13:7)? What are some ways you can grow in imitating them? _____

2. What does submitting to and obeying your church's leaders look like in real life (Heb. 13:17)? Give some concrete examples. _____

3. Does the command to submit to and obey church leaders mean that they can command us to do whatever they want? Why or why not? _____

Read Hebrews 10:24–25.

4. Have you ever considered that church attendance is a duty toward your fellow church members (Heb. 10:24–25)? Why is this the case? How should this impact what you do on Sunday morning? _____

5. Why do you think Christians today don't think attending church is one of their main duties (Hebrews 10:25)? How would you confront/encourage a Christian who told you attending church was not their duty? _____

Read Romans 12:3–18.

6. Why is it important as church members not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Rom. 12:3)? What will happen if we do think of ourselves more highly than we ought? _____

7. In verses 6–8, Paul lists out (not exhaustively) spiritual gifts. What are some ways you can use your spiritual gift to serve your brothers and sisters in Christ? _____

8. What is the command in the first part of Romans 12:10? Why is devotion in love so important? (Hint: see 1 John 4:20) _____

9. How are the three commands in verse 12 (rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, and devoted to prayer) related? How does obedience to these commands affect the whole church? _____

10. What are the two duties given in verse 13? What does this look like practically today? (Hint: see Rom. 16:1-2; Heb. 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 5–8) _____

11. Which do you think is harder, to weep with those who weep or to rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15)? Why? _____

12. Why is it important for all Christians, who belong to and represent the church, to heed verse 18? When is peace not possible with all men? _____

13. Pick one of the duties you see in these passages and commit to prayerfully working on it for the next few weeks. What are some practical steps you can take to practice this?¹ _____

¹ Many questions are taken from Bobby Jamieson, *Committing to One Another: Church Membership*, ed. Mark Dever, 9Marks Healthy Church Study Guides (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 42.