



Life in the Church

LIFE IN THE CHURCH

1. INTRODUCTION

In this study we will be looking at the benefits and responsibilities that flow from being a member of the local church.

2. THE CHURCH AS A BODY

In the New Testament, there are several different terms used to describe the church and one of the most widely used terms is that of a 'body'. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes the unity of believers as being members of Christ's Body. Make notes on what these verses tell you about the Body of Christ.

The concept of an isolated Christian is unscriptural and is fraught with danger for the one who believes he can grow outside of the body of Christ. Can you think of any dangers?

3. THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY

Another of the beautiful word pictures of the Church is that of a family, and as in all families, there are both privileges and responsibilities. Look at Psalm 68:5 - 6, Galatians 3:26; 4:7 and 2 Corinthians 6:18.

From these verses, what do you see as being privileges and responsibilities?

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(A) Serving each other

Write comments on each of these passages of scripture which highlight how we may serve each other.

Matthew 25:34 – 40

Galatians 6:2

1 Thessalonians 5: 12-17

Hebrews 3:13; 10:24 - 25

James 1:27

1 Peter 3:8

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There are many ways in which we can express our love. Listed are some very practical ways in which we may be able to offer kindness and service to others.

sick visiting	gardening	tape ministry
decorating	flower arranging	music
cleaning	electrical	drama
maintenance	transport	bookstall
news-sheet	catering	children's work
clerical	car repairs	youth work
secretarial	hospitality	caring
senior citizen's work	administration	intercession
art work	evangelism	refreshments
teaching	babysitting	special giving
writing	leadership	accounts

This is not an exhaustive list, but just gives a few suggestions. In God's sight, a lady who prays secretly, or a person who baby-sits to release a mum to attend a meeting, or someone who preaches, are all equal and providing they are obedient and faithful in their ministry, they will all have the same reward (see Romans 12:4-16).

Do you have any practical abilities which you feel may be of service to God's people? YES/NO

What are they?

(B) Keeping good relationships in the family of God

The Church of Jesus is a family and we are to preserve family unity (see Romans 12:14-18).

If you have something against another brother or sister you are to seek prayerfully to put it right (Matthew 18:15-18).

We are not to gossip about each other or the church, neither to those inside nor outside the church. Our speech and relationships are very important (see Ephesians 4). Make notes on points that are necessary to maintain unity.

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(C) Building up the family of God

Let us read 1 Corinthians 14:26-29 and Romans 12:3 - 8.

These verses tell us that we can build up and strengthen each other by bringing a prophecy or hymn or tongue or word of instruction, etc. Each member of the Church here is encouraged to seek God for such spiritual gifts and to use them in church gatherings. Building others up is not just for leaders but is the responsibility and privilege of every member.

Do you know what your spiritual gifts may be? If so, what?

(D) Giving to the work of the family of God

Whilst it is important to give of our time and talents, the Bible also teaches us about the necessity of financially supporting God's work. Jesus said that the way a man handled his money was an indication of whether he could be trusted with true spiritual riches (Luke 16:10-11).

God's servants need to be released from spending all their time in secular employment so that they can devote themselves fully to the work of ministry. Needs amongst the people of God are to be met. The poor are to be cared for. The church building needs to be heated, maintained, etc. God's way of meeting these needs is through the giving of His people - it has been so in both Old and New Testaments. Read some general New Testament principles in 2 Corinthians 8:3; 9:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Luke 6:38.

God intends our giving to be:-

- (a) in proportion to our means
- (b) with willingness and cheerfulness
- (c) systematic rather than haphazard
- (d) with faith, believing God will supply our needs as we give.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites gave a tithe (a tenth) of their income for the support of the religious leaders, the Levites, so that they could be free to concentrate on their spiritual ministries in the tabernacle and in teaching the people of God. And, whilst tithing is not specifically commanded in the New Testament, it does serve as a guide to the general level of giving we should be considering. In the days of financial difficulty one may be tempted not to give, but God has established a principle of faith... "Give and it shall be given to you".

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In the *New Testament Church* we practise tithing, and the money received is used to:-

- (a) pay for full time ministry
- (b) finance evangelistic outreach at home and abroad
- (c) maintain the church building
- (d) minister to those who have financial needs
- (e) cover administration costs

From time to time we take up special offerings for specific purposes. If you have any questions about giving, or the use of money, please feel free to ask.

We have a covenanting scheme, whereby the Church is able to recover the tax paid by the donors on their gifts. Please ask for details. We would strongly encourage you to take advantage of this scheme. You can simply and privately make more cash available to the church with the tax man's blessing.

Are you willing to, at least, tithe your income to the church? ...

Are you willing to covenant?

A leaflet giving fuller details on tithing is available on request.

SUMMARY

The Bible teaches us that we all need to belong to the local church. There is no scriptural basis for Christians being 'spiritual gypsies'. There is a great blessing in store for all who commit themselves to a local fellowship.