

Deceptions which Harm Christ-Honoring Church Membership

1) **Easy-Believism**: blurs line between Christians/Non-Christians, i.e., seeker sensitive. 2) **Country Club**: paying dues for place and status. 3) **Democratic**: a member who wants to represent their mission and goals. 4) **Independent Contractor**: wants to use the local church to expand their ministry. 5) **Good Ole Boy**: if something makes you feel bad the church shouldn't do that. It lacks confrontation for sin issues and doesn't see the role of preaching to bring conviction as a grace of God. 6) **Longevity**: attending for a long time qualifies you to be a member and serve. 7) **Consumer**: the church should be happy to have someone serve. 8) **Good-Fit Misconception**: certain ministries aren't offered so it isn't a good fit for my family. The church's role is seen as a ministry to offer to them. 9) **Past Experience**: Heb. 13:17, being a part of a local church is still commanded and elders are required to give an account for your soul.

>>The church's mission in Scripture is preaching the Gospel, discipling those who follow Christ, baptizing those who confess Christ as Lord, exercising discipline when sin is life-altering, and maturing members towards Christlikeness.

Seven Blessings of Church Membership

1. **Identity**: 3,000 saved in Acts 2:41, 5,000 in Acts 4:4. The church was keeping track of those who were being saved. In the church, elders hearing the confession of salvation and baptizing those who desire to be members is the first act of shepherding. Do new members know the Gospel? The church is made up of regenerate believers in Christ, Tit. 3:5.
2. **Priority**: 1 Pet. 5:2, elders are commanded to, "Shepherd the flock of God that is among you." Who are those who are among them? Who do elders give an account for, according to Heb. 13:17? Answer: Those who are identified as believers in the fellowship.
3. **Community**: "One another," is used 58x in Scripture. We are commanded to love one another (John 13:34), to serve (1 Pet. 4:10), be of the same mind (Phil. 2:2), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), pray for one another, be humble and gentle to one another (Eph. 4:2), don't complain or groan to one another (Jam. 5:9), be hospitable, (1 Pet. 4:9), greet one another (1 Pet. 5:14), love one another (1 John 3:11-24). Who is one another? Those who are living lives interwoven into the lives of others in the church, by practice, you are present.
4. **Loyalty**: this is loyalty to Christ and His church This is a call to persecution and suffering, and even death for having faith in Christ. Suffering is a test to demonstrate love for Christ and see God work in our lives as we grow in Christlikeness.
5. **Responsibility**: To serve one another and to do good to all, especially those of God's household, or His church, Gal. 6:10. Members should be counted on to serve and be known.
6. **Accountability**: I want to be held accountable for my walk in Christ. Do I listen and apply what I hear from the preached Word of God? Ps. 141:5, Prov. 12:1.
 - a. Shepherding Visits allow for at least one leader to know a family, to bring to light sin and issues that need more attention, and to know how their life (family, marriage, etc.) is going. Elders are commanded to watch out for the souls of the members, Heb. 13:17.
7. **Purity**: sometimes this requires confrontation and discipline. There are two territories in the world, one is the church and the other is outside the church. Outside the church is under the sway of the Evil One, Eph. 2:2, 1 John 5:19. Inside the church, Christ rules and requires purity and holiness. There is the hope of repentance for those who have been removed from the body, Rom. 2:4, 1 Tim. 1:20, 1 Cor. 5:13.

What Does it Mean to be a Happy Church Member?

- 1) Heavy Participation: without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, 1 Thess. 1:3.
 - 2) Willing to Suffer: with joy of the Holy Spirit, 1:6.
 - 3) Missions and Evangelism: the Word has gone forth... in every place, 1:8.
 - 4) Delighting in the Word of God: you received and welcomed the Word of God, 2:13.
 - 5) Deep Abiding Love for One Another: abounding more and more, 3:12.
 - 6) Determination Towards Holiness: blameless in holiness, 3:13.
 - 7) Mutual Comfort of the Future: comfort of our coming Savior's return, 4:13-18.
 - 8) Mutual Discipleship: building up one another, 5:11.
 - 9) Know Your Leaders: recognize those who labor among you, 5:12.
 - 10) Regarding Church Leaders: esteem them highly in love for their works' sake, 5:13.
 - 11) Humbly Reconcile Church Relationships: be at peace with one another, 5:13.
 - 12) Supporting One Another Spiritually: exhorting, comforting, pursuing good, 5:14-15.
- >>We are one body in Christ, Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12, Christ is the head, Eph. 5:23, we are to be devoted to the Word of God, prayers, songs, and baptisms, Acts 2:41-47.
- >>After Ananias and Sapphira died at the feet of the apostles in Acts 5, great fear fell on the church and unbelievers (5:11), unbelievers were afraid to join the church (5:13), but believers joined the church (5:14). This purified the church and kept membership for those who confessed Christ and were willing to follow Him and the apostles' teaching.
- >>Gal 2:20, Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." We live by faith in the Son of God, who gave Himself for those who are His.

Further Discussion and Application

As you look over the description of a happy church member, what have you noticed as you have increased your knowledge of the Word of God? Do you love the body more? Are you more obedient to His Word? Do you desire the things of heaven more than the things of this world? Is holiness an antidote to worldliness? Can you sense that even though you have farther to go, a lifetime of sanctification ahead, that there is great joy in knowing your salvation is being worked out in your life and you are bearing the fruit of righteousness? What has changed about you as you've grown in the Word of God and love for the church?

Referencing the 7 Blessings of Being a Church Member, how have you seen the church functioning when members engage in all seven areas? What happens to their lives and what phrases do they speak and what actions result from being deeply connected to others in the church? What is the joy of being close and in the lives of other believers in the church?

How can you increase in your love towards others in the church? What does it mean to be a believer in the church and member of God's household (Eph. 2:19-22)?