

Church Membership Responsibilities

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon focuses on the responsibilities of church membership, emphasizing the duties of elders towards the flock and the reciprocal responsibilities of church members towards their leaders and the church as a whole. It highlights the importance of knowing, esteeming, supporting, and praying for elders, as well as engaging in ministry alongside them. Additionally, it stresses the significance of attending regularly, praying consistently, living communally, preserving unity, serving faithfully, and pursuing holiness as essential responsibilities of church members.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 13:17, Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24, Ephesians 4:3, 1 Peter 4:10, 1 Peter 1:15

Topics: "Church Membership Responsibilities", "Elder and Congregation Relationship"

Description

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Transcript

Welcome to the final Foundations class for membership. I want us to read in Acts chapter 2. A very familiar passage of scripture that pictures the early church and their church life. Acts 2, 41-47.

You can follow with me. Acts 2, 41-47. As we turn there, let's just ask the Lord's blessings.

Pray with me. Father, the beauty of the Lord's day encourages us. The sunshine, the blessing of the weather, and the gathering of the saints.

Across the earth today, your church is gathered. And we are thankful to be here as a part of this local church for this day of worship and instruction and edification. So we look to you, Father, through your Son, by your Spirit, to meet with us, to speak to us, to quicken us in your ways and in your word.

So we ask for your help now. Help me. Help us.

Build us up in the faith. Strengthen us to make us good churchmen, churchwomen. To make us a blessing to the body and through the body of Christ.

For the glory of Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

Acts 2, 41. And they that gladly received his word were baptized. And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul. And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

And all that believed were together and had all things common. And sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.

Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved. I'm speaking this morning on church membership responsibilities.

And that's going to be an application across the board. Responsibilities of elders and responsibility of church members. Both to their leadership and to the church as a whole.

Church membership responsibilities. Someone has said no new Christian is spiritually born into a vacuum. But they're born rather into the fellowship of the church.

And are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. Thus joining the society of the saints. And so as Matthew Henry said, those who want to enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the disciplines of it also.

And there, by the word discipline there, Matthew Henry is talking about membership responsibilities. Full life responsibilities of stewardship as a member of the body of Christ. So I'm going to speak on two different headings today to cover responsibilities.

Number one, responsibilities of the elders to the flock. What are we called of God to do toward the flock. And then number two, the responsibility of the saints to the elders and to the church.

So I hope this stays that clear. Because with the blessing and privilege of being a member of a church or a shepherd within a church. Also comes genuine biblical responsibilities.

Both for pastors and elders and deacons by the way. Obviously as a church officer. But for every member, true member of the body of Christ.

We all have responsibilities. So first the responsibility of elders in the church. What are elders to be biblically? What are they to do biblically? What is their calling and labor to be? What should we be about? How does scripture define and describe the pastoral responsibilities given to us by the Lord? Well there are two general categories specifically mentioned in the New Testament.

A lot of things under those headings. But two general categories that cover the responsibilities of elders to the flock. That all elders are to fulfill if they are being biblical in their ministry.

I'm going to go through these fairly briefly because I've got a lot to cover. For you to know these since we all are to know them. Alright.

So elders responsibilities fall under two major areas. Which are these. Number one.

The ministry of the word of God to the saints. The ministry of the word of God to the saints. The first responsibility of elders.

The second area. The pastoral care of the saints. So the ministry of the word to the saints.

The pastoral care of the saints. First elders have been given the responsibility by the Lord Jesus Christ. The head of the church.

To proclaim and indoctrinate the saints of God in the word of God. That's the ministry of the word. It's a verbal ministry.

Whether that's public like this. Or from house to house. Which many of you have experienced over the years.

House to house. Ministry of the word. Ministry of the truth.

One on one. Preaching. Teaching.

Proclamation. Exhortation. Instruction.

Application. Encouragement. Promises.

All to flow out of the precepts and promises of Scripture. The preaching of the gospel. The teaching of the whole counsel of God.

Which is Paul's phrase. It's a wonderful phrase. The whole counsel of God in the ministry of the truth.

The opening up. The meaning of the Scriptures. You know, the times that I've been here.

For instance, an example. As Jeff has been in Hebrews. And I've had this experience with Alan in his series.

They'll be explaining the meaning of a word. Or a verse. Or the passage.

And suddenly, lights will come on in my mind. Things I've not seen before. And it opens up.

The ministry of the word opens up the meaning of the text of Scripture to us. And that's what it's supposed to be. Elder's responsibility to make, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the meaning of Scripture.

Week by week. With the goal that the saints are being instructed. And edified.

And equipped. For service. For their edification.

And grace. And for their being more equipped to do ministry in the world. Remember in Acts 6, the apostles knew their primary calling was to be the ministry of the word.

And prayer. And they, therefore, were given to that with purpose and intentionality. Elders are responsible before God to serve the saints the good food of God's word.

The Bible and God's truth is our only diet. And any truth that flows out of the Scripture, we are to equip the saints with as we're enabled. Jesus said, feed my sheep.

Paul said, preach the word. And he reminded the Thessalonians in one place. He said, remember the word of God which you have heard from us.

The word of God which you have heard from us. And all of you ought to be able to say that. We have heard from the pulpit of Provence Chapel the word of God.

Not the traditions of men. Not the opinions of men. But indeed, the word of God.

So that's the commission and task of every God-called pastor and elder that he's been given. The ministry of the word to the saints. That's our responsibility.

And that's what you can and should expect from us. It's not our intellect. It's not our opinions.

It's not the newest passing theological trend. It's not our newest creative thoughts that you need. It's the book of God that you need for your soul.

That's all we have to give you. And that's all we're committed to giving you. Now in Acts 20, Paul uses in his admonition to the Ephesian elders in his last time he's ever going to see them.

He uses both the words preach and teach when he's saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders. He says, you know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you. I love that.

He wasn't fearful or hesitant to preach anything he knew that the Ephesians would be helped by. He didn't back off from it. He didn't compromise things.

He spoke it. And then he says, but I've also taught you publicly and from house to house. So this is our calling and this is our commitment.

Because we want you to hear and believe only the truth. You know there's a lot out there. It sounds truthful, sounds good, but it's not the truth.

We want you to love and obey the truth. To live the truth. And because of that, the Bible is our message and our method.

It's our method as well. Not hesitating to proclaim to you the whole counsel of God. So the ministry of the word to you, that's what you can expect from us because that is our primary responsibility as elders to the flock.

Second category is the pastoral care of the flock. The first is a verbal ministry to you. And by the way, you have the responsibility to encourage one another with the word, don't you? It's not just us that are the spokesmen of the truth.

The body builds up one another with the truth, encouraging one another. But our responsibility is not only the ministry of the word to you. It's also especially the care of the saints.

Pastoral care of the flock. Elders are responsible to be both preachers and teachers and shepherds. Prophets and caregivers.

So if you like it like this, surgeons at times with the scalpel of the word and physicians with tender one-on-one care for your lives when that's necessary. Pastoral care is described both by Paul and Peter and in Hebrews. Paul in Acts 20, verse 28, when he says you're to watch out for, you're to take heed to and watch out for all the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

Peter says it this way. He says to shepherd or care for the flock under your care. I like one translation that says you're to be shepherds of the flock.

Be that. Live this way. Function this way.

Shepherding care one-on-one to the least, to the strongest, to the weakest, to the newest, to the oldest. Be shepherds of the flock. Hebrews 13 says that spiritual leaders are to keep watch over you as those who must give an account.

So elders have an account that we will give to God that church members don't have. And it's a fearful thing. It's a serious thing.

It's a sobering thing. We're called under Christ to watch over all the flock of God as watchmen, as overseers, as shepherds. Called to watch out for you spiritually.

That may mean to sound an alarm when it's needed. It means at times to protect and guard the flock from bad influences that others may not recognize. To have your spiritual health at the forefront of our hearts and our minds.

To know you well spiritually as much as we're able. To speak into your life words that are loving but always true. To shepherd the care about and to care for the sheep.

To give counsel when needed. To encourage and to strengthen and to disciple. That's our role as shepherds.

To be accountable to God for your spiritual health. Which in one way makes every elder in a sense a spiritual family care physician. You might call an elder at times because you're in need of support.

You might feel spiritually sick or hurting or damaged or wounded. And you need care right then. And you think of one to call.

Maybe first you call a sister or brother. But you often call one of your elders. And that's because in the moment, in time, that's the need.

You need a shepherd who knows you and is there for you. So you can expect to be truly shepherded here at Providence Chapel. In fact, you can't be a member here without that knowledge and commitment.

It means we will endeavor as we have time and grace from God to get to know you. The real you at times, right? And we will pastorally be sharing life relationally. And truly endeavoring to pastor you as shepherd to sheep.

We're called to love and care for your souls. We're to visit you house to house. We're to be available to you relationally with our time as we're able to make time.

In order to help you one-on-one. One shepherd to a couple. One shepherd to a family.

To walk with you. To support you. To rejoice with you when you rejoice.

To weep with you when the tears are flowing. To counsel and admonish you. To be faithful to you as a person.

And faithful to your spiritual well-being. That's what a shepherd is called to do. To shepherd the sheep.

The ministry of the word to you. The pastoral care of the flock heart to heart for you. That's the elder's responsibility toward the flock.

Heading number two then. Your responsibility to the elders and then to the church. Your responsibility to your elders first.

If the responsibilities of elders are genuine and important. So are the responsibilities of each church member. I'll only spend brief time on these.

But you're all an intelligent bunch. So you know some of these. This is by way of reminder.

So note these for homework or for meditation. I have seven responsibilities of church members toward their elders. We'll just hit on them very briefly.

Number one. Know them. Know your elders.

1 Thessalonians 5, 12, and 13. We exhort you brethren to know those who labor among you. And are over you in the Lord.

Know them. To trust someone in a proper way. You have to get to know them at some real level.

So you're going to know your elders increasingly. That's on you to know us. To learn them.

To watch and observe their lives. To not remain distant from them. But to have the opening of the heart toward them.

When needed, confidentiality. But with transparency. To get to know your elders better.

Don't remain distant from them. Know their life. Know their doctrine.

Know their walk. Know their heart. Work at knowing them properly and relationally.

Know them. Number two. Esteem them.

Now that has to be clarified. The word is respect. And literally it's the idea of estimate this.

And Paul says know them and esteem them highly for their work's sake. Alright, so think about this. You estimate an elder's work.

It's like you think. You sit back and you think. And you answer this for yourself.

Just how valuable is it to be under a biblical ministry? Just work that out. How valuable is it truly, month after month, year after year, to be under a biblical ministry? You're to value that. Not because of the men themselves, but because of the work they're doing.

Holding a proper high regard for their work. Holding a high regard because of their work. That you see the value of it.

Pastors are not to be followed blindly, are they? They're not to be idolized. They're not to be put on a pedestal. But rather are to be properly honored because of the significant importance of their work.

The ministry of the word. And the pastoral care of the flock. That's their work.

Why do elders do what they do? They do it for your salvation and your sanctification. That's the work. That's the goal.

That's what the labor's for. So it's the building up of the body of Christ that makes their work honorable. Not because of the men themselves, but because of the ministry the men carry out.

Know them. Esteem them. Estimate their work properly and have a high regard for it.

Number three. You're to support them spiritually and financially. One passage on this.

1 Timothy 5, 17 and 18. Let the rulers who rule well be counted worthy of double honor. Especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

For the scripture says, and this is from Moses' mouth. Paul's courting Moses. You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the grain.

Deuteronomy 25. And then Paul quotes from Jesus' mouth in Luke 10. The laborer is what? Worthy of his hire, of his wages.

And Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 16, 2. He says, upon the first day of the week, let everyone lay by him in stores. God has prospered him that there be no gatherings when I come. And he also said in 2 Corinthians 9, verses 6 through 8. About giving.

And by the way, often Paul's statements about giving are in the context of the collections for the needs of the saints in various places. But he still gives principles about giving financially. 2 Corinthians 9, 6 through 8. But this I say, he who sows sparingly will reap also sparingly.

And he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Everyone, according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give. Not grudgingly or out of necessity.

For God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you that you having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work. So giving faithfully is a responsibility of all the saints in the church.

So you're to know the elders. You're to esteem them for their work's sake. You're to support them spiritually and financially by your giving.

Fourth responsibility. You're to receive no unproven accusation against an elder. Receive no accusations against them except on the evidence of two or three witnesses.

1 Timothy 5. So this is picturing one person perhaps coming privately saying something to you. And this is the first you've heard anything of it. And they're making an accusation.

Whatever that might be. Whatever the nature of it. An accusation privately toward a church leader, an elder, or a church officer.

Or for that matter, a brother or sister. But this is about an elder. Beware, saints, of a private critical spirit toward any church leader.

They all have imperfections. But beware always of accusations toward them. Fifth responsibility.

Do ministry alongside your elders and your deacons for that matter. Do ministry alongside us. You minister to one another as we minister to you.

Your elders serve and your deacons serve. And you should pitch in and serve right alongside them. You encourage and pray with those who are in need.

When you know someone is in need. We are equipping you to do the work of true ministry to others. So actively pitch in.

Jump in. Find service opportunities. Ask for them.

Listen for ways. Discern ways that you can actively minister to others. There's all kinds of responsibilities.

Especially one-on-one opportunities for encouraging the saints. So actively do ministry alongside us. Sixth responsibility.

Pray for us. You might never know the value if you pray. A simple prayer for all eight of your church leaders.

The five elders. The three deacons. Pray for us.

Paul was always saying one. Brethren, pray for us. Pray for us.

We vastly, deeply need your prayers. And often it's the prayers of the saints that will give us what we need in the moment. Pray for us.

Seventh responsibility. Hebrews 13.7 says, Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God. Remember them.

It's the idea of considering them. Take to heart. And the text tells us what to remember.

Hebrews 13 says, Remember their conduct. That is their manner of life. Consider their manner of life.

Consider how they live. And consider their faith. Consider their conduct and their faith.

And imitate them. Imitate as we follow Christ. As we exemplify Him in life and in ministry and in truth.

Follow us as we follow Christ. So finally, to all church members. Your responsibilities to the church family, to church life.

And this will be brief. Church membership provides so many blessings. And we could all name a bunch right off the top of my head.

The sense of family, the support that's there, the friendship, love. So many blessings. But it brings with it also direct responsibilities and expectations that we have toward the church.

So I'm just going to give these quick. As a reminder, these are responsibilities of membership. Number one, attend regularly.

Church members should prioritize corporate worship always with their family. Hebrews 10. Remembering the gathering of God's people.

Not to neglect it, not to forsake it. Acts 2, which we read, the regular gathering together with one another. This is always a direct and significant means of God's grace to us.

And of deepening and reconnecting our friendships and our fellowship in the Lord. We need one another. Jason Courtney and I had lunch together on the way to see Luke Courtney's baseball game.

And it was special. We had a great lunch together just to reconnect and share some things. And heart to heart.

Brothers getting together with brothers. Sisters with sisters. Families with families.

Keeping the vital koinonia fellowship together. That happens when you attend faithfully and diligently and regularly. Number two, pray consistently.

I've already hit on that. But I'm not talking about just for your leaders. Pray for one another.

Pray for one another. The prayer requests that come up on the church signal app. Do you respond and not pray? If you respond, stop and pray.

Always. And it's so neat that suddenly 30 people, 20 people can be praying for something that someone has sent out. Because it's in their heart to ask for prayer.

They need prayer. Their loved one needs prayer. Pray, brethren.

Pray for one another. It's a vital. Pray consistently.

For the missions ministry of the church. For the preaching. Pray for the fellowship.

Pray for the women's ministry. Pray for the men's groups. Pray for all things concerning church life and ministry.

Number three, live communally. Someone has called this rigorous participation in church life. Rigorous participation.

I'm telling you, this is hard work to do that. In our individualistic society. In our lifestyle of busyness.

It's so easy to live isolated and connect once in a while, randomly. But we need to work at a mutual edification of one another. And accountability by developing increasingly good relationships within the body of Christ.

There's a reason that many of the metaphors in scripture are about the life of the church. Being members of one another. Joined to one another.

Our faith is personal, isn't it? But it isn't meant to be private. We should live in community as much as we are able. And that depends on you.

And it depends on me. Fourth responsibility as a member to the church. Preserve unity.

How much does Paul hammer on this throughout the New Testament? Preserve unity. Endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit. And the bond of peace.

Maintaining unity. Jesus says, by this will all men know that you are a disciple if you what? Have love one for another. Loving one another.

Bearing one another. Forgiving one another. Pursuing biblical God honoring peacemaking when conflicts arise.

Number four is preserving unity. Number five. Serve faithfully.

If you're a member of Providence Chapel, you're to be a servant. You're to be engaged in serving somehow. And so, endeavor to find some way you can serve.

Find a niche. Whether you ask the deacons, you ask the elders, you look, you observe. And you can do this.

You can pitch in. Each of us has the ability to serve in some capacity. So, there's a lot to be said for you finding areas that need help.

Whatever it might be. And stepping up to serve. So, discover that.

Where you can do the most good. And the final one for all of us as a member of the church. We are to pursue holiness of life.

Eagerly. Diligently. That's a responsibility of every member of the body of Christ.

The Christian life should be marked by an increasing pursuit of holiness and Christ-likeness. Because we're never going to be free of sin on this side of eternity. But together, together, together, we fight sin.

And we put sin to death in our own life. And we help one another to put sin to death in our lives. And make pursuing Christ in everyday life a top priority in our lives.

Responsibilities of church membership. Your elders feel regularly, I think, what Paul felt for the Philippians when he said this in Philippians 1. I thank God upon every remembrance of you. I can think of Tom Bowles and my mind starts smiling.

I love that guy. We thank God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer for you all.

Making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing. That He who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the very day of Jesus Christ.

Even as it is right to think this of you all. Because we have you in our hearts. We have you in our hearts.

What a privilege it is to be the body of Christ here together in this church. Well this ends our foundations classes for membership. And if you are pursuing membership here and that has not yet been finished.

Please go again to any elder. You find one of the elders. You go to them and you let them know where you are in that process.

And then get their input on finalizing your membership to be an official if you will. An official part of Providence Chapel. Amen.

Let's pray. Father we thank you that Christ is building this church. And we have a sure and certain promise that the gates of hell won't prevail against the building of the church of Jesus Christ.

And we are a part of that. We are a real part of it. We are one piece of the puzzle.

We are one part of the greater body of Christ. And we are thankful today. Oh Lord Jesus thank you for redeeming a people.

Thank you that your purpose was to have a people in the earth. That is the light of the world. That is the salt of the earth.

That is the city set on a hill. That is the only light in the darkness of this world. So Lord make us the church.

Build us. Keep us. Preserve us.

And Lord cause Providence Chapel we pray to function organically, supernaturally, biblically by the ministry of your spirit. We bless you this morning for the responsibilities we all have for the local church. Thank you in Christ's blessed name.

Amen. Amen.

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