

RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT TO THE CHURCH

Part 4: Selected Scriptures

In our series of study about the biblical reasons why we as believers must commit ourselves to the local church, we have learned that: (1) Commitment to the church demonstrates the reality of our salvation and our love for the Lord Jesus; (2) Commitment to the church reinforces our biblical accountability; (3) Commitment to the church expresses our adherence to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith; (4) Commitment to the church fosters our participation in the Great Commission. To conclude our consideration of this issue of church membership, here are the final two essential reasons:

5. Commitment to the church ensures the exercise of _____.

Church discipline plays an integral and vital role in the sanctification, growth in holiness and spiritual health of the church. In its formative and positive sense, church discipline involves the instruction of biblical truths to church members for the purpose of cultivating godliness and obedience to God's Word. In its corrective sense, church discipline is the biblical confrontation of an erring believer regarding the sin issues in his life. The biblical response to sin is not to condemn our sinning brother or sister, nor to tolerate their sin but to confront them and reprove them of their sins and plead for their godly repentance (Matt. 18:15-17; Luke 6:37; 2 Cor. 2:5-11).

The exercise of church discipline should be understood through the perspective of these divine purposes and motivations: (1) God's commitment to His holiness and the purity of His people (Lev. 19:2; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Josh. 7; 1 Cor. 10:8-11; Acts 5:1-16); (2) God's fatherly love for His people (Heb. 12:5-6; Rev. 3:19); (3) God's concern for the restoration of a sinning believer (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1); (4) God's regard for His glory and the honor of Christ (1 Pet. 2:12).

The procedure for church discipline is outlined by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in His instruction to the church in Matthew 18:15-17: (1) Confront the sinning individual privately; (2) If the offender does not listen, take some witnesses; (3) If the offender persists in his sin and still refuses to repent, tell the church; (4) If the offender rejects the admonition and pursuit of the church, regard him as an unbeliever (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

6. Commitment to the church promotes the use of _____.

A spiritual gift is a significant ability given to each Christian by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of equipping the church to carry out its ministry until Jesus returns. God gives every believer these gifts and abilities in order to serve other Christians, to strengthen the faith of fellow believers and to help the church fulfill its mission in spreading the gospel of Christ to the lost world (1 Corinthians 12:1,4-5,11; Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11). A helpful way in discovering and cultivating one's spiritual gift is by following these four fundamental principles: (a) Guidance through prayer and self-evaluation; (b) Involve^ment in ministry opportunities; (c) Feedback through counsel and confirmation of fellow believers; (d) Trustworthiness in using one's spiritual gifts.