

Membership in the Church

Romans 12:4-8

If you could be a _____ of God and a _____ in the kingdom of God, would you? Today, we're exploring what it _____ to be a member of the church. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our _____, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." The Bible gives us _____ on every page. Scripture reveals God's _____ to bless and redeem man from His weaknesses and sins.

Many people today say, "Jesus, yes; but the _____, no." About 80 percent of Americans believe you can be a "good Christian" _____ ever being a member of any church. Many want to be Christians but not members of an "organized _____". Some people have decided to be Christians "at large" or to establish small "house churches"; but they hold the organized church today in _____. Can a Christian please the Lord Jesus and _____ to be part of the church He built? Is attending church and being a church member _____?

Some quit worshipping at church because they had a _____ experience, and we're sorry for that. Some leave the church because they have _____ and are ashamed. Some stop going because they disagree with some _____ of the church. Many in our culture think churches are too "_____ " and have quit because they don't want to hear about sin. Others have simply gotten too _____ for God and don't have time to worship. We hope you'll put God _____; and we want to explore the _____ of the church that Jesus built. He purchased His church for a reason, and you will be _____ to be a member.

Our reading today comes from Romans 12:4-8.

I hear people speak about "_____ the church", and they have an important message. We must be the _____ of Christ in the world today. The notion that we can "be the church" but not a _____ of any local congregation, however, is an unscriptural idea. God expects His people to _____ with one another for worship and ministry. **Read what the Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 10:24-25.** In the New Testament, when a Christian quit assembling with the church, he was _____ from God. He was _____ the faith. He was hurting _____ and hurting the _____ by returning to the world.

Jesus built the church to bless us. Solomon said, "Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). People in the church _____ each other stronger, better, and more faithful and committed. Each Christian needs the _____ of love and faith that his

brothers and sisters give him. Each Christian needs to so _____ and so _____ that he provides an example of commitment to the cause of Christ. Saying, “I love Christ, but I won’t go to church” sends a _____ signal. It says, “I love God, but I’ll _____ which commands I’ll obey and which I won’t.” This person isn’t really obeying _____, but is obeying _____ and his own wishes. **Read what Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.** God knew His people needed the _____ and the _____ that each one could give the other to grow and to remain strong in faith. Two are better than one, _____ they have each other.

Where would we be _____ Bible teachers and godly examples? If you have children, don’t _____ them out of a spiritual education. It’s a shame that nearly 40 percent of the young people in America grow up without any spiritual _____. They need the _____ of God to face the temptations and the pitfalls of life. Your children’s education isn’t complete if it lacks the _____. If you educate their _____ but fail to educate their _____, you haven’t prepared them for the day when Jesus comes again. They won’t know Him, but will be like the five foolish virgins who didn’t have oil for the lamps and found themselves shut out of the _____. Someone converted you to _____, and they were likely faithful members of the church. They not only taught you the _____ but also taught you about the _____. Bible stories are not myths or legends; they are historical accounts of God’s _____ with man. The Bible helps us to make _____ of where we came from, why we’re here, and what will happen to us after we die. We _____ this spiritual education!

The _____ is God’s kingdom in this life, and _____ is God’s kingdom in the next life. We enter the church here so that we may enter the _____ of heaven in the days to come. **Read Philippians 3:20-21.** People who have this _____ of heaven and want to live for the Lord have a tremendous _____ by putting their faith there and being active in church.

Read 1 John 3:1-4. Church helps us _____ on the things that matter and to keep ourselves ready and pure for the _____ of our Lord Jesus.

We ask, “What was the church _____ in the New Testament?” The word “church” refers to an assembly, a congregation that was called together for a specific _____. After Paul had established several congregations on his first missionary journey, he _____ to those congregations, strengthening and encouraging them. Acts 14:23 says, “When they had appointed elders for them in _____ church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Later, Paul wrote “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons” (Philippians 1:1). Did you notice that all the members were called “_____” and not a special class? There are no “super saints” in the Lord’s church; _____ is important and loved.

New Testament churches were _____ with established leaders. They were _____ congregations, meeting at set times and in set locations. Sometimes churches _____ in a family's house; but in those days a large house could hold a congregation. In some cases, congregations _____ outside or in caves. At that time, the church was _____ persecuted and considered illegal. The earliest church _____ date about 250 A.D. Although they could not openly show themselves, churches assembled to _____ and to encourage each other.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13. In the early church God gave _____. God knew that His people needed training and equipping to do the _____ that He called them to do: to take the gospel to the whole world, and to build up the church, and to render help to the needy.

Salvation is never without _____. To be a member of the church means we're _____ to the Lord and to our brethren. The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever does not _____ his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). When you become a Christian, the Lord _____ you to His church. From that day forward, you're God's _____ and belong to Christ. You are not your own, and, since you belong to Christ, you must consider how your life _____ on Christ and on His church.

Second Timothy 2:19 says, "Nevertheless, the _____ foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord _____ those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to _____ from wickedness.'" People who live for the Lord should live so as to bring _____ and _____ to the name of Christ. Sadly, some Christians by their _____ language and _____ behavior bring shame on the Lord Jesus and His church. When we become a Christian, we decide to live the moral life that Jesus Christ _____. We must _____ sin behind. Paul asked, "Are we to continue in sin so that _____ may increase? May it never be! How shall we who _____ to sin still _____ in it?" (Romans 6:1-2).

We are obligated to support the church by our _____. **Read Hebrews 10:24-25.** When we get involved in the _____ of the church, we influence others to get involved. By attending worship, we get to _____ our brothers and sisters, and we can encourage them to stay _____ to the Lord; we can stimulate them to love God; and we can stimulate them to be kind and to serve others.

God also expects His people to support _____ the work of the church. **Read what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.** As Christians, we have an _____ to one another. Titus 3:14 says, "Our people must also learn to _____ in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful." **Read 1 John 3:17-18.** We can show our love for God by _____ for others and helping them. The best thing that you can do to _____

another's life is to _____ him about the Lord. The primary work of the church is to _____ the gospel to every creature. People need _____ than physical food; they need God's _____ to live spiritually. The Lord Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not _____ by bread alone, but by _____ word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). We must stay _____ working for the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Someone says, "Well, Phil, we had a _____ experience at church and we won't be going back." I'm sorry that you had that experience, but was it the _____ church or just an individual that hurt you? The Bible teaches that when a fellow Christian sins against you, you're to go to that person _____ and talk to him, trying to restore the relationship (Matthew 18:15). Many times people, rather than following the instructions of the Lord, simply _____ and separate themselves from other godly people that they need in their lives. Don't quit the church over some _____ brother or sister. Talk to that person and _____ it out.

We will _____ have to deal with rude, selfish, and sometimes immature people; but if the Lord was gracious enough to _____ and put up with us and all our sins, we can be gracious enough to forgive and put up with those who sin only a little against us. We don't want to _____ our souls because we couldn't get along with a brother or sister in the church. I would _____ forgive and be forgiven than to hold a grudge and lose my soul.

Some say they want to _____ Jesus, but have no _____ for the church; but if we enter into a relationship with the Lord, we must also embrace the Lord's _____. The Bible calls the church the household or _____ of God in 1 Timothy 3:15. The church is not only God's family, but also His _____ (Matthew 16:18). He loved the church so much that He purchased it with His own _____ (Acts 20:28). We must not set the church _____ so quickly. To reject the church is to reject _____ and His will.

We all realize the church is made up of fallible people who sometimes _____ to measure up to the will of God. Before we give up on the church, let's _____ that we all "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). We all need God's _____. God's gracious love moves our _____ to walk in the light and to be in His family.

To become a Christian and be added by the Lord to His church, you must _____ Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Repent of your _____, every one of them, and turn your heart to the Lord. Confess the Lord Jesus before others and be _____ into Christ. Romans 6:3 says we are baptized into His _____, and verse 6 says we are crucified with Christ "in order that our body of _____ might be done away with." We're buried with Christ and raised to walk in _____ of life. Nothing, nothing is more important!