

# RETHINKING CHURCH

SESSION 8 | JULY 23, 2017 | CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP INTEGRITY

- Is church membership Biblical?
  - Is the membership the mission field or the mission force?
- 1 Tim 5:3-16—The Ephesus church seemed organized by “lists.”
- Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders”
  - Which leaders? If there is no local body, then who do we submit to?
  - To whom will they give an account?
  - This appears to be spiritual rulers. The Greek ἡγεύομαι [hegeomai] is "to lead or rule," and we get the English word *hegemony* from this term.
  - One would rightfully ask whether this instruction applies to those fully of the age of grace. Are there those who **have rule over you** as there was in the Kingdom-offer age of the Apostles? 1 Thes 5:12-13 speaks of those who **are over you in the Lord, and admonish you**, but the command is to **appreciate** these individuals (v. 12) and **esteem them very highly in love** (v. 13) rather than to **obey**. In 2 Thes 3:14 the Apostle Paul speaks of those who do not obey his instruction, but this cannot be broadened beyond Paul. In 1 Tim 5:17 Paul speaks of **elders that rule well** but they are not to be "obeyed" but **counted worthy of double honor**.
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- 1 Peter 5:1-5 & Acts 20:29-30—specific flock.
  - Am I responsible as Pastor for every believer?
- 1 Cor 5:1-12
  - How do you kick someone out who wasn't in?

## WHAT SHOULD MEMBERSHIP MEAN?

- I am a believer in Jesus Christ as my Savior.
- I am submitting to the Spiritual authority of the church.
- I am mutually connected to the members of this body and have a primary obligation to their care.
- I will be faithful to the assembly in attendance and financial support.
- My lifestyle and language will honor the reputation of this body.
- I recognize that I may be publicly called to account for sinful activity.

## HOW TO BECOME A CHURCH MEMBER

- Your personal testimony through Baptism (or Letter of Recommendation based on Baptism)
- Your acceptance of the membership standards.
- Your approval by the congregation.

## HOW TO DISMISS A MEMBER

- If you didn't come into the church without a vote, can you dismiss yourself?
  - “The act of excommunication may not be performed by a member on himself...he is, in effect, a self murderer.” (The Summary of Church Discipline)
- The Letter of Recommendation was originally designed to keep integrity of church membership.

## THE DISCIPLINE FACTOR

- Baptist discipline in the 1800s—
  - Rebuke: wounded the conscience of a weak brother, caused disharmony, attended a church of which they were not a member.
  - Suspension: taught heresy or caused schism.
  - Excommunication: sin which brought the church into public contempt, including breaking any of the Ten Commandments.
  - How did they do it? (from Pendleton’s Church Manual)
    - A charge was brought to the church.
    - An inquiry into the application of Matthew 18.
    - Ruled out of order if the person had not been twice approached.
    - If they had been twice approached, they were summonsed to a business meeting.
    - If they were found innocent by the congregation, the charges were dropped.
    - If they were found guilty and were unrepentant, they were excommunicated.
    - If they were found guilty and were repentant, they were immediately restored.
- Proper Church Discipline: A witness must initiate the discipline personally by going to the sinful person.
  - Step One: Approach the sinful person
    - Privately
    - Based on facts, not hearsay
    - For clearly Biblical sins, not “scruples.”
    - Do not approach if you are not willing to accept repentance
  - Step Two: Take 2 or 3 others
    - Say the same thing you said previously!
  - Step Three: Tell it to the church
    - If you are not reasonable and correct in your accusation, you will likely be going through this process soon!
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