



## Discipleship 101 New Believer Lesson #9 Expectations of Membership

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September 6, 2010



### Introduction:

*Every Christian is a member of the church universal, which reigns invisibly in the hearts of all true believers. But to make that church visible to the world, we unite with other Christians into smaller units. That means, for example, a local congregation; it may also include command structures, like denominations; it may include special training forces, like [Prison Fellowship](#), to equip the church's fighting units.*

*Once we see this bigger picture, it becomes obvious that membership in a local church is not optional; it is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian.*

*This has to be the answer we give to those who say it doesn't matter whether you belong to a church--the advice we give to friends who are church-hopping. As I write in my new book [The Body](#), a casual attitude toward the church is the central reason we Christians have so little influence in society. Sucked in by the individualism of the age, we are undermining the very instrument God has chosen to witness His kingdom to the world.*

Chuck Colson - *Can We Have Religion Without the Church?* Church Series, # 6, October 29, 1992

[Note: The majority of material in lessons #7 through 9 on membership I gleaned almost entirely from Pastor Kelvin Lott. It is with great appreciation and thankfulness that I utilize his hard work to add to these three membership-specific lessons in the discipleship course material – Andy Madonio]

### Great Expectations:

It is not enough merely to “be” a member of a church. A person can have a membership card, have his or her name on a membership list, and still be no more of a blessing than when they were not a member. As Chuck Colson says in the introduction, “*a casual attitude toward the church is the central reason we Christians have so little influence in society*”. Membership has its privileges, but just as in any relationship, membership also has its expectations.

At Rochester First, the expectations are simple, but powerful.

**Faithfulness:** What good does it do to belong if you are sporadic in church **attendance**?

**Prayer:** More important than attendance is the disciple’s **prayer** life. Lack of prayer is death to a Christian. Prayer is the lifeblood of our church, bringing vitality to the **pastor and his entire staff**; prayer breathes life into community and global **outreach activities**; [effective fervent prayer](#) is ultimately the reason for **winning souls** to God’s Kingdom, and for **every ministry** that God initiates here.

**Finances:** In the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, providing for God’s servants is stressed. Giving was a way of life for the Israelites and for the early church. **Tithes** (a term

meaning a ‘tenth’) are the means for the Church to touch the world, provide for the needy, and bless God’s servants. Read [Malachi 3:10](#) to see the importance God places on believers giving back a portion of what He only loaned to us anyway.

**Offerings** are over-and-above tithes, and are a sacrificial means to worship the Lord with His provision to you. Read [Proverbs 3:9-10](#). As the pastor has said several hundred times, you cannot out give God.

**Evangelism:** Unless the lost are reached, what good is your faith? Faithfulness in evangelism in any form makes Jesus happy. He said, *“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the LORD of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field”* ([Matthew 9:37-38](#))

**Ministry:** As mentioned in Lesson #7, [Ephesians 4:11-17](#) defines the five-fold ministry of the Church. Can’t see yourself as an evangelist, pastor, or teacher? Everyone has a place, and [Romans 12:4-8](#) reveals more opportunities:

*Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is **prophesying**, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is **servicing**, let him serve; if it is **teaching**, let him teach; if it is **encouraging**, let him encourage; if it is **contributing** to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is **leadership**, let him govern diligently; if it is **showing mercy**, let him do it cheerfully.*

Find your gift, find your place, and know the truth of the old adage, “Many hands make the work light”.

**Vision & Burden:** [Proverbs 29:18](#) grimly states, *“Where there is no vision the people perish”*. The church’s clear vision, core values, and burden for the lost (spelled out clearly in lessons #8 and #9) should be yours as well. Membership means you that you agree in your heart that these things are as vital to you as they are to us. Own the vision and embrace it; live it out in your life; share it with others.

See you in Lesson #10!

[Note – This lesson can be downloaded in PDF format for printing or sharing]