

What is Expected of Members of a Local Congregation?

Various denominations and world religions have a variety of expectations from their members. Mormons for example who take part in a ritual ceremony are to wear sacred underwear. The Latter Day Saints also encourage members to be baptized for dead relatives. Jaintist Digambaras forsake clothing as a form of asceticism. And the Jehovah Witnesses discourage members from having birthday parties and blood transfusions.

When one becomes a member of the Church of Christ what is expected of them?

1) Having Obeyed the Gospel

First, no one can be a member of a local congregation without first being saved from their sins. God has given several logical steps that are taken by a sinner which results in their salvation. He must hear the Gospel message. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Next, he must believe the message he has heard about God and the sending of His Son to die for all mankind. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Having believed that Jesus is the Son of God he must repent or turn away from sin and turn back to God (Acts 2:38). After Peter accused the Jews in a sermon at Pentecost of killing the Son of God, they asked what should they do. Peter answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Furthermore they will need to have confessed Christ verbally and publically. "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9,10). Finally, one is saved at the point of baptism when their sins are washed away. God sent

Ananias to tell Paul what he must do to be saved. Ananias told Paul, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). On the day of Pentecost "those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41,47).

2) Willingness to Join

Far too many Christians fail to understand the necessity of membership in a local congregation. Some think it is optional. However, without local church membership no local congregation could ever exist. The church is a family or household of God, but if there are not local members of the family there cannot be a local household of God. The church is to be lead by shepherds/elders of the flock. If there were not local sheep there can be no flock for the shepherds to tend to feed.

After Saul of Tarsus was converted he eventually returned to Jerusalem and "he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out" (Acts 9:26-28).

3) Remaining Faithful

Once a Christian has placed membership at a local congregation they need to be faithful. The early Christians were faithful and committed to the work. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The ultimate reward for faithfulness is a crown of life after this life is over. "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

4) Faithful Attendance

A major part of being faithful is the good habit of faithful attendance by assembling with the saints. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner

of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24,25). Just as it was with Adam in the Garden it is not good for Christians to be alone. God created the church so that we would have others to worship with and encourage one another. If one member does not have to attend then not member has to attend. If no one attends there can be no local congregation of believers.

5) Worship in Spirit and in Truth

When Christians assemble for worship they must be true worshipers those whom God is seeking to worship Him. Who are the true worshipers? "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23,24). True worshipers will participate in the Divinely designed activities as they are commanded in the New Testament. On the first day of every week they will observe the Lord's Supper. "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; [b] this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:23-25). They will also give back to God. "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper" (1 Cor. 16:1). They will sing spiritual songs "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). They will listen to God's Word as it is preached to them. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7). Finally, they will pray to God (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15).

6) Edification of Saints

Worshiping God with fellow saints is only a part of why Christians need to be members of a local

congregation. Paul tells us that a congregation works like a body where the various parts are necessary in order for the whole body to live, grow and function. God gave various members to the body (church) "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:12,16).

7) Unity

Paul wrote to the local congregation at Corinth, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Christians are to have the a unity or oneness not found in any human institution. This unity can only be obtained and maintained on the basis of an mutually accepted standard - The Word of God. Agreement among Christians on doctrinal issues is possible if all submit themselves to what is written in the Bible.

8) Search Scriptures Daily

In order to maintain unity based on the Word of God, Christians must be in the habit of searching the scriptures daily. The men and women of Berea had this habit. "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

9) Share the Word With the Lost

Christians were saved so they could spread the Good News of Salvation to others. Paul consider himself to be a debtor who had to pay forward by preaching to others. Paul commended the church at Thessalonica for spreading the Word of God. "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not

need to say anything" (1 Thess. 1:6-8).

10) Observe all the 37 or 38 "one another" commandments in the New Testament

The phrase "one another" is used many time in the New Testament. These are commandments which require one to render something beneficial to another. The local congregation affords the Christian the perfect place to fulfill many of these commandments.

- John 13:34 - love one another
- Romans 12:16 - be of the same mind toward one another
- Romans 14:19 - building up of one another
- Romans 15:7 - accept one another
- Galatians 5:13 - serve one another
- Galatians 6:2 - bear one another's burdens
- Ephesians 4:25 - members of one another
- Ephesians 4:32 - be kind to one another
- Ephesians 5:21 - be subject to one another
- Hebrews 10:24 -stimulate one another
- James 5:16 - confess your sins to one another and pray for one another
- 1 Peter 4:9 - be hospitable to one another

God never intended for a Christian to have to go it alone. Everyone needs someone to help them in their journey in this life toward eternal life. Based upon the duties demanded of each individual Christians in the passages above it would be impossible for one to make it to heaven without being a part of a local congregation. .

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Service Times

Sunday
 Bible Study.....9:30 am
 Worship Service.....10:30 am
 Worship Service.....5:00 pm

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