The Rewards and Responsibilities
Of Church Membership
I Corinthians 12:14-20; 27 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to our scripture text in I Corinthians 12. And let's read verses 14-20, and also verse 27.

I Corinthians 12:14-20; 27 (NKJV)

14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

18 But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.

19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. (And verse 27)

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

PRAYER
During your lifetime, perhaps some of you have been a member of several groups or organizations.

*Perhaps when you were in school you were a member of The National Honor Society, or The Beta Club, or The FFA or The Student Council.

*If you went to a College or University, chances are you were a member of a certain Fraternity or Sorority.

*And in your adult life, maybe you have been a member of The Ruritan Club, or A Homemaker’s Club, or a Hunting Club.

People become members of clubs and organizations for a number of reasons. Some become members because they like the comraderie with like-minded people. Some become members because they want to be part of a service-oriented club or organization. And some like to become members of certain clubs or organizations because it looks really good on a resume’.

As Christians, you and I are members of something far greater than any earthly club or organization we belong to, and that is we are members of THE LORD’S CHURCH.

As a member of the LORD’S CHURCH, you and I are members of THE ONLY BODY ON EARTH ESTABLISHED BY JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF.

Matthew 16:18 a “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
The Church was founded by Jesus Christ. What club, what organization, what corporation, what company, what business in the world can point to Jesus Christ as its founder? NONE! As a member of the Lord's Church you belong to the most unique entity on earth.

Also as **A MEMBER OF THE LORD’S CHURCH YOU BELONG TO THE ONLY INVINCIBLE FORCE ON EARTH.**

Listen again to what Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18.....**

"On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

**ILLUSTRATION:** I’m going to give you a list of familiar names, and I want you to tell me what they all have in common:

ENRON, E.F. HUTTON, TWA, RCA, STANDARD OIL CO., EASTERN AIRLINES, WOOLWORTHS, AMERICAN MOTORS, BLOCKBUSTER, and MONTGOMERY WARDS.

(What do they all have in common? NONE OF THEM STILL EXIST. They are on the list of once-great companies that vanished)

As a member of the LORD’S CHURCH, you and I belong to the most invincible force on earth. Until the Lord comes to take His Church out of this world, the Church will survive every attack and every crisis she faces.

This morning, I would like for us to take just a few minutes to think about THE REWARDS and RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A MEMBER OF THE LORD’S CHURCH.
I. The Rewards I Receive From The Church

(A) One of the rewards is **The Church Gives Me A Place to FELLOWSHIP**.

*Acts 2:42 (NKJV)* And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers.

Some people claim they can be a Christian without the Church. The Bible says you can't. Listen to the emphasis on *fellowship* in the New Testament.

*Ephesians 2:19 (NKJV)* says we are **FELLOW CITIZENS**.
*Ephesians 3:6 (NKJV)* says we are **FELLOW HEIRS**.
*Philippians 4:3 (NKJV)* says we are **FELLOW WORKERS**.
*Philippians 2:25 (NKJV)* says we are **FELLOW SOLDIERS**.
*Colossians 1:7 (NKJV)* says we are **FELLOW SERVANTS**.

One of our most basic human needs is the need to belong. God never intended for us to live in complete isolation, in fact, God said, *“It is not good that man should be alone.”*

Well it is not good that a Christian be alone. As a member of the Lord's Church we belong to a family of like-minded believers.

* A family that will pray for us when we are in need.
* A family that will encourage us when we are down.
* A family that will comfort us when we are hurting.
* A family that will grieve with us when we grieve.

How rewarding it is to **FELLOWSHIP WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS IN CHRIST!**
Another reward of being a member of the Lord's Church is that the Church Gives Me A Place To Grow.

II Peter 3:18 (NKJV) “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

ILLUSTRATION: I know a number of you grow vegetables in your garden each year. Chances are if you are growing tomatoes, each of your “starter plants” came with an instruction label telling you the best environment to grow your tomatoes in. Most tomatoes need an environment where there’s lots of sunshine, and where the soil is good and moist. That is where tomatoes grow best.

As Christians, the best place for us to grow spiritually is in the local Church. I have never seen a Christian grow and mature in his or her faith by separating themselves from the Lord's Church. In fact, I have seen quite the opposite. When a Christian removes himself from an environment where the word of God is preached and taught, that Christian tends to start dying spiritually.

Just like with plants in a garden, spiritual growth does not occur overnight. It requires a steady nurturing week after week, year after year.
Another reward of being a member of the Lord’s Church is: The Church Gives Me A Place to **SERVE**.

In our scripture text in **I Corinthians 12**, we read in **VERSES 4-6**.......

“There are diversities (or different kinds) of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same LORD. And there are diversities (or different kinds) of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.”

There is no such thing as an “unimportant Church member.” As members of the Lord’s Church, God has blessed each and everyone of us with certain gifts to be used in service inside and outside the Church.

- Your gift may be teaching.
- Your gift may be singing.
- Your gift may be leading.
- Your gift may be benevolent work like helping the needy or the poor.

Whatever your God-given gift may be, the Church gives you a place to develop and use your gifts in service to others.

Being a member of the Lord’s Church is very rewarding: **The Church gives me a place to FELLOWSHIP**........a **PLACE TO GROW**........and a **PLACE TO SERVE**.

But being a member of the Lord’s Church isn’t just about “What I Get Out of The Church,” it is also about “What I Give To The Church.”

Let’s consider............
II. The Responsibilities I Have To The Church

1. If you had to summarize our responsibilities to the Church in just a single word, it would be the word “COMMITMENT.”

(A) First of all, I am to be COMMITTED to SUPPORTING the Church with my REGULAR ATTENDANCE.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 (NKJV) 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.”

We are living in a day and time when it seems many Christians are neglecting this most basic of all responsibilities, and that is to be in the Lord’s House on the Lord’s Day. This is not “my day,” this is the Lord’s Day. And because it is the “Lord’s Day” my number one priority, my number one commitment to keep is to the Lord.

The day you and I gave our lives to Jesus Christ we made a commitment to “follow Him,” and part of that commitment means we are “follow Him to His house” on the first day of the week!
Secondly, I am to be COMMITTED to SUPPORTING the Church with my REGULAR GIVING.

I Corinthians 16:1,2 (NKJV) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the Churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6:21 that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

You may have some of your money in stocks and bonds or in a 401K, but there is no better place to invest your money than in the Lord’s Church and the various missions supported by the Church.

Thirdly, I am to be COMMITTED to SUPPORTING the Church with my REGULAR SERVICE.

Galatians 6:9,10 (NKJV) And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Statistics show that 80% of the work in the Church is done by 20% of the people. This means for every ten people in the Church, two do the work while eight sit back and watch them do it. Are you one of “the workers” or one of “the spectators?”
Fourthly, I am to be COMMITTED to SUPPORTING the Church by REGULARLY INVITING OTHERS.

Matthew 28:19 (NKJV) “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Sharing our faith with others is our greatest responsibility as a Christian. We have a responsibility to tell others about the love of Christ. We have a responsibility to invite others to Church.

The cruelest thing we could ever do to our lost loved ones and lost friends is to never speak to them about Jesus. That would be the equivalent of saying to them, “I don’t care if you are lost for all eternity.”

I challenge you to start inviting those lost loved ones and friends to Church every week until they respond. If you have loved ones who used to attend Church regularly but have stopped going, invite them too.

CONCLUSION

We tend to be a forgetful people. And sometimes we need to be reminded of the great rewards that are ours’ as members of the Lord’s Church. But we also need to be reminded of our great responsibilities.

In closing I want to share this little piece called, “Ten Little Christians.” Perhaps you have heard it before, but it bears repeating:
Ten Little Christians

10 little Christians standing in line. One disliked the preacher, then there were 9.

9 little Christians stayed very late. One overslept, then there were 8.

8 little Christians on their way to heaven. One took the “wide road” then there were 7.

7 little Christians chirping like chicks. One didn’t like the music, so then there 6.

6 little Christians, seemed very much alive, but one lost interest, then there were 5.

5 little Christians pulling for heaven’s shore, one stopped to rest, then there were 4.

4 little Christians busy as a bee, one got his feelings hurt, then there were 3.

3 little Christians knew not what to do, one joined another Church, then there were 2.

2 little Christians, our rhyme is nearly done, differed with each other, then there was 1.

1 little Christian can’t do much that’s true, but he brought a friend, then there were 2.

2 earnest Christians, each won one more, that doubled the Church, then there were 4.

4 sincere Christians, worked early and late, each won another, then there were 8.

8 devout Christians, if they doubled as before, in about a year, they’d have 1,024.

In this little jingle there’s a lesson that is true, you belong either to the building or to the wrecking crew!