

LESSON XVI MEMBERSHIP—ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

INTRODUCTION: Every relationship in life that is worthwhile involves responsibility. Membership in the Church of God bestows upon one the highest and holiest privileges and blessings and, therefore, involves the greatest responsibility and most serious obligations. Some of these responsibilities of membership in the Church are:

I. Local Church Membership: Since the congregation is the only unit of organization known in the New Testament for carrying forward the work of the Church, it follows that for a Christian to be in full fellowship with the Church, he must be associated with, be a part of, and amenable to a local church. There is no such thing in the New Testament Scriptures described as "Membership at large" in the Church of God. Paul in his work always associated himself with a congregation of Christians (Acts 9:26-30; 13:1-3; 14:25-28).

II. Subjection to Elders As a Member of a Congregation:

1. Elders to exercise oversight (I Pet. 5:1-5).
2. "Obey them that have the rule over you — they watch for your souls" (Heb. 13:17; I Tim. 5:17-19).

III. Joint Participation or Fellowship in the Work of the Local Church:

1. "Ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:1, 2).
2. "Every joint supplieth" (Eph. 4:16).
3. "Every tree known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44).
4. "Let each man do" (II Cor. 8:7; 8:11-15).
5. "Prove your own work" (Gal. 6:4, 5).

IV. Preservation of Unity, Peace and Harmony of the Body:

1. "No divisions among you" (I Cor. 1:10).
2. "No schism — same care one for another" (I Cor. 12:24, 25).
3. "Avoid them that cause division among you" (Rom. 16:17-18; I Tim. 6:3-4; Titus 1:10- 11; II Jn. 9:11).
4. "Endeavoring (making some definite effort) to keep unity of Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3).

V. Preserving and Maintaining the Purity of the Church:

1. Christ died to establish its purity (Eph. 5:25-27).
2. We must live to maintain it (II Tim. 2:19-22; I Tim. 6:11; I Tim. 4:12; I Tim. 5:22; Phil. 1:27).

VI. Fruit to Be Borne; Church Has a Mission to Fill; Souls To Be Saved:

1. United with Christ that we might bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).
2. Branches that do not bring forth fruit will be cut off (Jn. 15:2).
3. So shall ye be my disciples (Jn. 15:8).

Questions For Discussion

1. What does membership in the Church bestow upon one?
2. What is God's only unit of organization for work and service?
 - a. Should not every Christian be amenable to some congregation?
 - b. How is a "Christian at Large" defeating the mission and purpose of the Church?
3. Who has the oversight of the congregation?
4. To whom shall the membership submit themselves; how?
5. To what extent shall each member participate in the work of the Church?
6. In respect to peace and unity, what should each one do?
7. To what extent should each one strive for unity?
8. Christ died to establish "what" concerning the Church?
9. What is the duty of the member with respect thereto?
10. What is the mission of Christians, respecting fruitage?