

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: Church membership: Biblical or not****Church membership: Biblical or not - posted by deltadom (), on: 2008/10/15 21:17**

Is church membership biblical? Because I can not find anything to justify it?
This is an issue I am facing in our church

Re: Church membership: Biblical or not - posted by BlazedbyGod, on: 2008/10/15 21:58

I think you answered your own question.

Could you define what you mean by "church membership" a little clearer?

I would say unbiblical, but that is only if I understand you correctly. Asking this question, you have to also ask the question pertaining to "organic church life" or the "going to Church (in a building) life".

Re: - posted by reformer, on: 2008/10/15 22:10

I would agree that it is un-biblical...unless I am convinced otherwise. One of our elders at church did a raise a good point on membership he said it is so that they will know who you are. Know how to pray for you, to help you, to encourage you and so forth. If you are a member you are known, not just someone who comes in and leaves. For me that made more sense. It sounded more like a heart of a shepherd. Does that make membership biblical...No, but it takes the edge of church membership, at least for me.

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2008/10/15 22:51

John Piper just did a message on just this point...

(http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByDate/2008/2989_How_Important_Is_Church_Membership/) How important is church membership?

He raises some points I had never considered.

Re: - posted by Miccah (), on: 2008/10/16 3:05

No

Re:, on: 2008/10/16 7:37

There is nothing in scripture about becoming a member of a church. Most churches put more requirements on becoming a member than Christ does about becoming born again.

Having said that, being a member of a church is not some great sin either... so long as you do it unto the Lord.

Krispy

Re: - posted by MikeH, on: 2008/10/16 9:15

Absolutely essential!!

1Co 12:12-14 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

Or is that not the type of church membership you were thinking about? :-D

Kind regards

Mike

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2008/10/16 9:57

Well, it IS biblical to be under authority, so the question is, without "membership", how exactly will someone exercise authority and you submit to it? Now, if you are absolutely committed to one church body, membership would be a mere formality, but I think it's good to solidify your commitment, even though the stipulations might not exactly be biblical.

Re:, on: 2008/10/16 11:28

Quote:
-----Well, it IS biblical to be under authority, so the question is, without "membership", how exactly will someone exercise authority and you submit to it? Now, if you are absolutely committed to one church body, membership would be a mere formality, but I think it's good to solidify your commitment, even though the stipulations might not exactly be biblical.

I guess I don't understand this... I absolutely agree with what you're saying about authority. About I don't see any connection between that and signing a card making you a member so you can vote, etc...

And by the way, voting is nowhere found in scripture either. That is something I am very much against. Either the leadership is being led by the Spirit, or it isn't. The church is not a democracy. It's not a republic either.

Krispy

Re: - posted by broclint (), on: 2008/10/16 11:36

I would add in defense of membership or whatever else one would call it these scriptures:
Amos 3:3 (NKJV) 3 Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV) 10 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.

It is quite obvious that unless there is doctrinal agreement and agreement upon some practical applications of doctrine that confusion and discord is bound to arise. And as has already been pointed out, how can there be any discipline if there is not some Biblical principles upon which the majority of the church is bound together in some fashion "speaking the same thing". It does not have to be called "membership" per se, but unless it is one person i.e. in an independent position as a pastor or house church position, there has to be some sort of agreed upon principles and doctrines by which those in authority administer discipline, and without discipline there is chaos and room for the devil to do great havoc. That is my experience speaking!

To say that "we just go by the Bible" is a naive position, and this forum is a prime example of how quickly disunity can be introduced without laid out rules and bylaws and a doctrinal position and moderators to monitor the posts.

Clint

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2008/10/16 11:58

Everyone that is born of the spirit is a member of the Body of Christ, and is in the Church.

You can't join the Church by signing a piece of paper.

It is important that every believer is joined to other believers in a local Body.

Mike

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2008/10/16 13:04

If the church(local assembly) is biblical then the membership should have some type of biblical guidelines. The local assembly should be in agreement.

However the local churches of our day are not like the church was in the beginning. The church began in the power of the Holy Ghost and had authority for discipline. There are so many different denominations and so many different assemblies that people feel that they can go where they please.

Many today will not receive discipline and will go somewhere else. There are also many today who have forsaken the joining of themselves together as the bible warns us not to do. There is not the praying and waiting on the Lord as their us e to be when there seemed to be a fear of the Lord that motivated people to love God with all their heart.

The church began in the power of the Holy Spirit and I believe God is going to bring it back to it's fullness for these last days that we will be facing. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit!

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2008/10/16 13:54

I think "membership" is only Biblical in the sense that the local church assembly recognizes somebody as a true brother or sister in the Lord, and recognizes that individual's commitment to that local assembly. For obviously, if a church can "excommunicate" or "disfellowship" somebody that is in their midst for sin or heresy, if there is a formal recognition for this, then it seems to me logical that there must be some way in which one recognizes another as belonging to that locality. How could you formally disfellowship one from the local assembly unless you formally accepted them?

Re: - posted by RevBenjamin, on: 2008/10/16 14:14

The Church today is quite different than the early Church.

Should the question be, is the Church we have today Biblical, based on a different standard of membership?

Members today are milked dry to build bigger and better assemblies, baseball fields, more expensive and colorful choirs robes, Sunday School Quarterlies. We now want to profit off Wednesday Night Dinners, Mrs Smith's latest book displayed in the Lobby along with other Marketing-ideas as mugs,cups,T-shirts, license plates with the Church LOGO.

Those outside who call the church in need of help are first asked...Are you a Member, do you tithe? No Sir! I'm sorry Sir , we can't help you.

In becoming a member, one must first take a 2 week course explaining just exactly how and who started the Denomination. One must then sign a statement of faith agreeing with the particular doctrine at hand.

Then one must sign a pledge card, stating your GROSS income, and pledge at least 10%. If one fails to cough up their legally signed document, the Church CAN take you to court. Just as any pledge you may make over the phone to Jerry's Kids is a legal and binding oath.

I agree, we need to clean our own house first before we try to clean up the House of Representatives or House of Congress.

Blessings,
R.G. Benjamin

Re: - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2008/10/16 14:31

The present day denominational system that makes up most of the organized church is not of God.

The Church is the Body of Christ and the Body of Christ cannot be divided therefore God is against anything that divides His Body. Denominations do not bring unity to the Body but division.

Many denominations had their beginnings in revivals and moves of God. Fresh revelation and restoration of vital truths were restored to the Church. However any time that man gets his hands on that which God is doing, the end result will be that of mixture, having some of God in it and a lot of man. Instead of Jesus building His Church, what we have is man building his own little kingdoms for his own glory.

Christ is the Head of His Body and men are the heads of the various denominations. The true Church can be in the denominations but the denominations can never be the Church. It is only what God is building on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ that will endure the great shaking in these last days. All that man has built will be consumed as wood, hay, and stubble in the fire that will try all things.

The true Church is a living breathing organism which is filled by the Spirit of God, while the organized Church is an organization that is built by man. The true Church is being led by the Spirit of God through waiting on Him and seeking Him in fervent prayer. The organized Church moves through planning by committees that are set up by man.

In His Love,

Mike

Re: - posted by broclint (), on: 2008/10/16 16:26

Brothers I believe we are all saying much the same thing in our posts... the reality of THE CHURCH invisible bonded together by "the common salvation..." and "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints". But as Jude points out in that very place from which I took that quote, there was and there will always be "certain men", or certain women that slip in unawares, regardless of how much discernment we may have of the Spirit, and bring with them damnable doctrines or the spirit of discord, or the ambition to draw away disciples after themselves just as we are warned in all the epistles and by the Lord Jesus Christ. And that ability to slip in is even escalated by lack of an agreed upon declaration of faith and practice. The leader or pastor may see it coming but before anything can be done, the wolf may do some major damage before others are convinced of the mal intent. Their naïveté and ignorance of scripture may make them susceptible to the damnable doctrines that can so quickly be disseminated among the congregation.

Agreed that denomination and man made organizations are not the same as "and the Lord added daily to the church such as were being saved", yet it is a fact of church history that carries on down to this present moment that despite all the most dedicated and determined efforts of men of God in prayer and seeking of the leading of the Holy Spirit, whatever they call themselves or others call them (such as the Methodists when what they were was simply a group of men seeking revival such as many of us presently aspire to have), there is the inevitability and necessity of organization of some sort.

Granted that when organization becomes more important than the revival and the adding of souls that necessitated the organization, then THE CHURCH, to which souls were born, becomes simply churches.

If you can tell me the solution to that dilemma I would certainly like to hear it, because it has been one that has plagued THE CHURCH for all these centuries. Regardless if it is a group of two or three churches in one city with one senior pastor and two pastors under him, or an organization like dear Zac Poonen is the elder of, "a rose by any other name..." there is still a definite necessity for organization, for agreement upon doctrine, for some form of financial management to keep up property and etc.

If we are talking about mega churches, and denominations that spend hard earned dollars upon whatever they can to compete with the world to "draw their young people" or to add "comfort" for the "saints"... programs that can operate and do operate quite nicely with sound and fury signifying nothing without God, but full of references to Him... then leave me out.

I thank God for those in whom I have found a "like precious faith" here on SI... however, again I believe that we would ha

ve to agree that the lack of agreement on issues that seem small and insignificant can cause some very sticky situations that our dear brothers have to resolve even here among brothers and sisters, and they have to be resolved in the framework of a "man made" organization, hopefully and believably one that has been prayed over and adapted to this format or medium for the glory of God.

My thoughts... and as I said on another thread, I give up my right to be right ;-)

Clint

Re: 'pas', on: 2008/10/16 21:49

A WATCHWORD FOR ALL WHO PROFESS AND CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS

by JOSEPH IRONS

"Beware of men." (Matthew 10:17)

This is the caution which the Son of God gave to His disciples, when He ministered among them on earth, and the Holy Ghost caused it to be penned, that the true Church of God might use it as a watchword to the end of time; and never since this caution dropped from the lips of Jesus, has it been needed than now; for men seem to vie with the prince of darkness who shall most effectually oppose the kingdom of Christ and the spiritual interests of His blood-bought family.

"Beware of men!"--Not merely of profane men, open infidels; but little caution is necessary respecting them, because "the show of their countenance does witness against them, and they declare their sin as Sodom--they hide it not;" (Isa. 3:9) but the men who assume the profession of Christianity, without possessing its vital principle, are the men of whom the Saviour's watchword is, "Beware!"--The men who put on the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof--whose carnal minds and carnal interests have always warred against the pure truth of God, and perverted the whole plan of salvation by lying fables and human traditions, seducing the souls of millions to utter destruction.

This baneful poison produced the monster Popery in the days of Constantine, when carnal men professed to be Christians, because the emperor professed to be such, and thrust themselves into priestly office, blending priestly power with political power, until superstition and tyranny supplanted Christianity, and exercised a despotic sway over mankind; proudly dictating to every man's conscience, plundering his property, degrading his existence, and pretending to power over his eternal destiny; so that priestcraft sat like an infernal incubus over the entire population of Christendom, and spread its darkness, horror, and death over this favored land, with tortures and cruelties perfectly satanic.

That awful night was chased away by the glorious Reformation, and the principles of liberty have had a shining day; but who does not see the evening shades gathering around us again, threatening midnight darkness with tempestuous horror? Intellectual pride vaunts itself against the light of revelation; superstition is trampling upon the simplicity of the gospel; and error, of every name and form, is at war with the truth.

There is now scarcely a city or town in England but in which there are men sprung up in the office of priest (some Papist, some Puseyite,) who are using all their efforts to bring back those dark days and those degrading superstitions which dishonor God, foster the pride of man, and delude millions of souls fatally; and hence the importance of our Saviour's watchword, "Beware of men!"--For these men are doing more mischief than devils could do without them.

"Beware of men" who boast of apostolical succession, which they cannot prove, and who are no more like the apostles of our Lord, either in doctrine or character, than sin is like holiness, or Satan like God. See what monstrous opinions they broach, such as baptismal regeneration, which rejects the ministry of the Holy Ghost; priestly absolution, which insults and virtually denies Christ; ecclesiastical authority, which sets at nought the word and the decrees of God the Father, and thus genders Atheism, by denying all the Persons of the Godhead. Can they be honest, when they know that there is not a word in all the New Testament to sanction the existence of an official human priesthood, Christ only being the Priest of the Gospel Church after the order of Melchisedec? Can they be honest in their boasted reference to the fathers, when they know that the usurpation of ecclesiastical power, and the right of one Christian minister to exercise authority over others, were never allowed in the churches for 300 years after Christ's ascension to glory?

"Beware of men!" Such as our dear Redeemer has described, "who desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers." (Luke 20:46) And again, the same Divine Teacher says, they outwardly appear righteous b

efore men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity; therefore He denounces them as serpents and a generation of vipers, who shall not escape the damnation of hell. (Matt. 23:28-33) Indeed, whoever would see a full-length portrait of Puseyism, has only to read the whole of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. It has enslaved the finest minds; it has prostrated the brightest genius; it has sugared the most virulent poison; and sainted the most reprobate enemies to vital godliness; in fact, it has outdone Popery itself in deception.

The tradition of apostolic succession is a religious hoax: the existence of an official human priesthood is a rejection of Christ and a return to Judaism; the doctrine of baptismal regeneration is a barefaced falsehood; and all pretensions to priestly absolution are blasphemy. Yet men who hold these hideous notions, arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to teach their fellow-men, saying with lying words, as did the false teachers in Jeremiah's day, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these;" (Jer. 7:4) or, in modern language, "The Church, the Church, the Church," is the enthusiastic cry of those who possess not one feature of the Church of Christ as described in Holy Scripture, and as exhibited in the early ages. The Church of Christ is a spiritual body.

"Beware of men!" Those very men who now seek to do by "all who profess and call themselves Christians," as the spider does by the fly; first bind the wings and legs of our liberty with an invisible web; and then suck our blood by persecution, as in days of yore. Oh! Search the Scriptures, and learn from thence what the true Church of God is, and do not suffer a carnal priesthood to blind your eyes, enslave your consciences, and ruin your souls. See how they toil for human patronage; mark their thirst for worldly honors; watch their abuse of ecclesiastical power; weigh the mock sanctity of their long prayers; and then say if these are the marks of apostolic descendants, or the characteristics of Christ's ministers. Rather, are they not the features of Baal's priests--the broad marks of Antichrist?

"Beware of men!" Even of those who pass for evangelical men; for every grade of error is to be found among them. Even while I am writing this paper, my soul is distressed with the awful perversions of the word of God which surround me, and which are advocated by men of renown; one drowning the doctrine of regeneration in the baptismal font; another substituting the credence of carnal reason for the faith of God's elect, and another denying the Son of God; while the great bulk of so-called evangelical preachers try to dethrone Christ, and to enthrone proud free-will as absolute sovereign.

"Beware of men!" For even those whose views are, in the main, scriptural, seem to be determined to bite and devour one another through jealousy, that they make each other offenders for a word, and put more stress upon the shibboleth of a party than upon the fundamental doctrines of the gospel; drinking into the spirit which our Lord reproveth in His disciples, when they said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbid him, because he followed not us!" Oh! These are awful signs of the times, when even the real disciples of Christ have exchanged brotherly love for party-spirit and jealousy; all seeking their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's. (Phil. 2:21)

What, then, it may be asked, is real religion? I answer, it is altogether supernatural. It originates in the love of God the Father to His whole Church, His chosen family, which is scattered all over the world. It is intrusted to God the Son, in positive responsibility by an everlasting covenant, for the redemption of their persons with His own blood, and their eternal salvation in His own righteousness imputed to them. It is communicated to them by the regenerating and quickening operations of the Holy Ghost creating in them a new and holy life, capable of enjoying God. This new and holy life consists of all the graces of Holy Spirit, and becomes manifest by their acting upon Christ; Faith trusts Him and claims Him: Hope aspires after Him, and waits for Him; Love cleaves to Him and honors Him, rejecting all that is unlike Him.

Reader, is this your religion? If so, heaven is secure. If not, when you die you will descend to eternal despair, though loaded with all the forms of Pharisees--all the traditions of Rome--and all the mock sanctity of Oxford.

Arise, O Lord, and plead thine own cause, prays His willing servant in the cause of truth.