

What Do I Owe This Local Congregation?

Michael L. Riddle

Introduction:

1. Common attitude: What can this congregation provide for me? What do YOU have to offer ME?
2. Needed attitude: What do I owe this local congregation? What
3. **Rom. 12:1** - a living sacrifice, reasonable service.
4. **Eph. 3:21** – to him be glory... in the church

Discussion:

I. My Membership

- A. The Lord built his church – **Matt. 16:13-18; Ac. 20:28; Eph. 5:25** – One church, one body of saved (the universal church)
- B. The scriptures speak of local churches throughout the world – Rom. 16:16
 - a. Used in the plural
 - b. 16 local church mentioned specifically (Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, 7 Asia)
- C. The universal church was never organized to do any work
- D. Nowhere in the scripture do we read of the church in its' totality every doing anything.
- E. The new testament pattern consists of local congregations carrying out the work.
- F. The organization of Elders, Deacons, and Saints (**Phil. 1:1**) is only carried out at the local level.
- G. This is the error of the Catholic church – trying to activate the universal church. 'Catholic' = universal. Trying to connect all of the "churches" together.
- H. A characteristic of the local church is the self-governing, autonomous, independent leadership. (**1 Pt. 5:2**)
- I. Can't just be a member "at large"
- J. **Acts 2:41-42**; fellowship = working together
- K. **Acts 9:26-28**; Paul's example: Acts 9 converted in Damascus, stayed for a while, went into Arabia where he remained for 3 years and went back to Jerusalem and tried to become a member of that local congregation – they were hesitant, but eventually he was part of them.
- L. **Acts 11:19-26**; Part of a congregation so long as they were there.
- M. **Eph. 4:25** – members one of another
 - a. Not "they", but "we". **Rom. 12:4** – we have many members in one body
- N. Can't effectively carry out the work with no accountability and protection of joining with a local church. -- Can't just be a "floater" or a "drifter".

II. My Time

- A. Time is valuable. (**Eph. 5:15**)
- B. **Matt. 20:6** – why have you been standing idle all day. Could the lord ask this about your spiritual work in this local congregation?
- C. Our duty to the Lord in providing our bodies a living sacrifice is "finding the time" – ultimately we all have the same amount of time. Perhaps our time to serve the Lord is buried below all of our overcommitments. – "Martha, Martha you are cumbered about with many things" ().
- D. I give my time to the Lord through the local church.
- E. Learn to budget my time!
- F. **2 Cor. 6:12** – restrained in your own affections

- G. **1 Jn. 2:15-16** – a love of the world steals our time
- H. **Mt. 6:33** – seek 1st the kingdom!
- I. Not when it is convenient, not when we are at a better stage in our career... NOW.
- J. Our time in assembling with the saints – **Heb. 10:23-25**
 - a. Consider one another! – not just for my own good
 - i. Stir up others to love and good works
 - b. Assembling – not a particular time of assembling
 - i. Didn't say not forsaking the 11 hour.
 - ii. We are assembled together at 10 for Bible study.
 - iii. Two Sundays a month, we assemble at 1:30 for study and singing.
 - iv. We assemble at 7PM on Thursdays
 - v. THAT is the assembling of the saints at Glencoe!
 - vi. There is no way to look at this passage and somehow come to the conclusion that I don't need to be there for the 10 hour or the midweek study, that they are somehow less important or not required.
 - vii. Considering one another is to assemble at every assembly (10, 11, 130, thurs 7)
 - viii. Every once in a while, there will be times that we are unable to make it and that is understood!
 - ix. Some come only when it is convenient for them.
 - x. If many missed work as frequently as they missed the assemblies, they would not have a job
 - 1. "Oh I didn't think this day was as important as this day"
 - xi. In far too many congregations, the attendance at the xx hour is less than the xx hour. Every member at every service should be the norm, not the exception!
 - c. We owe the Lord our time to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. To stir up one another to love and good works.
- K. We owe it to this local congregation to spend time studying God's word.
 - a. **Heb. 5:12** – ought to be teachers...
 - i. How much time do you spend in preparation for Bible study?
 - ii. How much are you teaching one another?
 - b. **1 Pt. 2:2** – desire the sincere milk of the word.
 - c. **2 Tim. 2:15** - rightly dividing the word of truth
- L. I owe the Lord and this congregation my time. Not only during the assembling, but on Saturday night when I prepare for bible study. And all time...

III. My Effort/Commitment/Participation

- A. Not only to me members, not only to be present, not only study and grow, but to be ACTIVE, to give my effort, to be involved, to work.
- B. **1 Cor. 14:26** – encourage one another
- C. **Eph. 4:16** – every joint supplies
- D. **Rom. 12:3-8** – individually members of one another. Even if I have but one talent, I am expected to supply it.
- E. **1 Cor. 12:12-24**. – all the contribution is important
- F. Don't just take from, but supply (give) to the congregation.

- a. Teaching and admonishing with Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs – we engage and ALL sing (**Col. 3:16**).
- b. Step up and teach – **Heb. 5:12**
- c. Encourage each other - **1 Thess. 5:11-15**
 - i. Be kind to one another, Send a card to the sick, Call those in need

IV. My Purity

- A. **James 1:26-27** – unspotted from the world
- B. Deny ungodliness, worldly lust, live righteously, soberly, godly – **Titus 2:11-12**
- C. **1 Cor. 5:6-7** – a little leaven leavens the whole lump – sin will infect a church
 - a. 2 verses on describing the one who was having his fathers wife, the rest on the church of not being pure and not purging out the leaven!
- D. **1 Cor. 5:4-5** – deliver such a one to Satan
- E. **1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:6,14-15** – don't have fellowship from the withdrawn
 - a. Because I want to obey the Lord
 - b. Because I want to keep the church pure
 - c. Because I want to help that individual
- F. Any disciplinary action taken is congregational action, and all members must take the action for it to be effective.

Conclusion:

1. What kind of local church would this congregation be if every member had the same commitment that YOU did?
2. What changes in your life would occur if this local congregation no longer existed? If the doors were closed, the building was sold, and it was no longer here? Would that cause any changes in your life?
3. If each member were as faithful, and as involved, and as active as you, then how long would this congregation survive?
4. We have an obligation as part of this local congregation, to present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. We owe this local congregation: Our membership, Our time, Our effort/commitment, and our purity.
5. We each should take that as seriously as we possibly can, and fulfill each of these responsibilities to the absolute best of our ability.