

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | NOVEMBER 10, 2019



Class 5 – More Examples of Accountability in the NT

PURPOSE: Determining what biblically warrants a given congregation formalizing their church membership, as it becomes a springboard for genuine church growth.

Introduction

As a word of precaution this class is not meant to vilify people who are church attendees but not official church members. The next class (Class 6) will address various cases in which one's remaining as only an attendee can also be found as "biblically warranted."

The focus of this class also is not to elevate a particular way of going about church membership as a matter of orthodoxy –like an essential doctrine that must be adhered to for salvation.

Church membership at its core is a means of communication. It is a means by which a member communicates to all that he/she is capable of walking in step with where a local church body is at in their corporate accountability to biblical instruction. Without the Bible there would be no reason to be a church member. With the Bible in our possession it is natural to see a local body coming together in one voice in their adherence and affections to what the Word says.

In this segment of the discussion we are looking at how formalized church membership walks very much in step with the church of the first century A.D. Undoubtedly the early church was diverse since Gentiles, not just circumcised Jews, were welcome in. But as far as belief and conduct is concerned, the early church appears to have had an immediate expectation of uniform corporate accountability.

I. More Visible Persons Must Follow Higher Standards

A. Elders

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. ¹⁸ For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer deserves his wages.” ¹⁹ Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. ²⁰ As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. ²¹ In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. ²² **Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands,** nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

- 1 Timothy 5:17-22

(See also 2 Corinthians 3:10-15).

B. Teachers

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that **we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**

- James 3:1

C. Apostles Too (Past Examples)

But when Cephas came to Antioch, **I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.** ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

- Galatians 2:11-14

(See also John 21:15-19 and 2 Corinthians 12:7)

II. Formal Times of Reporting In

A. Paul to the Council of Jerusalem (James)

When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ **After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.** ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, “You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed. They are all zealous for the law, ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

- Acts 21:17-15

B. Brothers (Delegates) Accompanying Titus

And not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to travel with us as we carry out this act of grace that is being ministered by us, for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our good will. ²⁰ We take this course so that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, ²¹ for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man. ²² **And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found earnest in many matters,** but who is now more earnest than ever because of his great confidence in you.

- 2 Corinthians 8:19-22

III. Stages of Restoration and Warning

A. Church Discipline

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. **If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.** ¹⁶ But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.

- Matthew 18:15-17

B. Addressing Patterns of Carnality

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test! ⁶ I hope you will find out that we have not failed the test.

– 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

Conclusion

The above passages involve a kind of accountability that was functional and not theoretical. Question: would this work in most churches today?

Membership Matters Course Outline:

- Introduction
- Local Church as a Growing Structure
- Local Church for Building Up a People
- Vital Leadership Roles
- Examples of Accountability in the NT
- More Examples of Accountability in the NT
- Unique Cases & Cautions with Membership
- Failed Systems of the Past
- (Thanksgiving Break – No Equipping Hour)
- *Trellis and the Vine* Book Review - Part 1 of 2
- *Trellis and the Vine* Book Review - Part 2 of 2