

Section: Doctrine of Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

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Lesson 86 <> Q110

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**TEACHING NOTES**

Intro:

We are currently in the section of theology called Ecclesiology, which is the study of the church.

It is the study of how God has instructed us, His redeemed people, to act and what we are to do and not do, and how we are supposed to operate. One of the critical components of the health of the local church is its governance and membership unity. How has God designed the local church to be organized and who are the members of it?

As we look to the holy Scriptures, there are three primary roles for the local church to be occupied by.

This leads us to Questions 110 in our Word of Truth Catechism:

**Q110. What are the three roles in the local church?**

The Bible distinctly instructs a local church to have qualified elders and committed members, of which some may be qualified deacons.

To help us digest this today, I want to use the example of a professional football team, which has three critical parts:

🡪Owner - Coaches – Players (of which some are captains).

The owner is the one to whom the team belongs. He is the boss. What he wants is what he gets. Everybody works for the owner. When the championship trophy is lifted, it is first given to the owner… **why?** It is his team. With God, He owns us; we are His church. It is his glory for which we exist.

Let’s look at some scripture that helps us see this foundational truth!

**1. Jesus is the Head of the Church**

**1. Jesus is called the head of the church**

*For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*  ***-Ephesians 5:23***

*15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.* ***-Ephesians 4:15-16***

*And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.*  ***-Colossians 1:18***

**2. God is the one who buys the church and owns the church.**

You do not **belong** to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your life.

-**1 Cor. 6:19-20**

**3. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of the church**

*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.*

***-1 Peter 5:4***

🡪 It is by His **power** that we live. It is by His **will** that we live. It is under His **authority** that we live.

**4. Jesus is the Authority of the church.**

**Matthew 28:18-20** Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20**and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

This is not your church; it is not Pastor Joshua’s church, not the elders… It is God’s church!

Nothing else we talk about will be right if we don’t get this right first.

He is the owner, and we are His and under His authority.

Now with that said, He has ordained that the sheep of his flock have shepherds that lead them under Christ’s authority.

**2. Qualified Elders**

**In your Catechism hand out is a simple definition for an elder.**

**Elders:** Qualified and called men who lead, teach, and govern the local church based on the doctrine and authority of Scripture, exercising wisdom in all matters.

Back to my football team analogy, the owner employs a coaching staff to be responsible to lead the team to play the game. Coaches are called to know the team and manage and lead them well. If the team is not doing well, it is the coaches who are held responsible. The players are to listen to the coaches and joyfully submit to their leadership of the team.

Scriptures that begin to reveal this office to us are:

1. **Hebrews 13:7** Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life and imitate their faith.
2. **Hebrews 13:17** Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account.
3. **1 Thessalonians 5:12** We beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you “in the Lord” and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.
4. **Acts 20:28** (speaking to the elders of Ephesus) "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God."

So what God has set up is that each local congregation, under the authority of Christ and by His word and Spirit, recognizes and submits to the leaders whom God qualifies and commissions.

Now, there are three Greek words used in the New testament to identity the office of Pastoral Elder.

The first we find in…

**Ephesians 4:11-12** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

**The word for shepherd here is “Poimenas.”**

This is where we get the word Pastor. Pastor means to shepherd.

**What does a shepherd do?** He feeds (instructs/teaches), leads, protects and cares for the flock.

We see the **verb form of shepherding** in two critical scriptures: Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5.

**Acts 20:28**  Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you ***overseers***. **Be shepherds** of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

**So here we see that the act of shepherding the church is for Holy Spirit-readied and appointed overseers. That word “overseer” is the Greek word--**Episkopoi--which means “supervisor, manager, guardian.”

**Look at the other passage where we see God’s call to the shepherds:**

**1 Peter 5:1-4** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: **2 shepherd the flock** of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3**not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4**And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

So there is a call to shepherd and oversee the flock that is among you; that is the local church.

As a pastor of this church, I am not responsible for the flock that is Valley Baptist or Sovereign Grace. They have their own local church shepherds.

Did you notice these who shepherd, pastor, or oversee are also referred to as ELDERS here? Peter says:

**1 Peter 5:1** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,

The Greek word for elder is “Presbuteroi.” Elders are Presbyters. This has Jewish roots (i.e. Sanhedrin, the Jewish fathers, it is a fatherly leader).

**So what we MUST understand is that in all these instructions for the local church leadership:**

**Elder = Overseer/Bishop = Pastor/Shepherd**  These all describe the same office of church leadership in Scripture!

Our desire to move back to a biblical use of these titles has meant a change in who we call Pastor. (examples)

What that means is biblically speaking, an elder is not a different position or office then an overseer or a pastor.

Now, ***The duties given in Scripture that the pastoral elders are to carry out.***

The Scriptures give us four main duties for which the elders are responsible:

**1. FEEDING the Flock**

John 21: Jesus tells Peter “Feed my sheep."

**Can you imagine the responsibility and privilege that Peter must have felt in being commissioned by Jesus to feed HIS sheep? I can tell you that this is a high and weighty call. To feed in this metaphor means to instruct and teach the flock.** This is the charge given not just to me as your preaching pastor but to every man whom God will raise up to the office of biblical elder.

Paul is clear in 1 Timothy 3:2 that elders must **“be able to teach.”**

Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self- controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach -**1 Timothy 3:2**

Though not every elder God raises up will have full-time preaching or teaching responsibilities (since some will be more naturally gifted in communication and/or will use their gifts in this area more), every elder must be able to teach the full counsel of God in the Bible. This does not mean they know how to give instruction in general.. it means they are equipped and able to rightly divide the word of God and teach it to God’s people. To do this well means years of study and training.

This is one of the ways the Lord qualifies who will be charged with Shepherding the flock.. The ability to rightly and fully handle the word of God and teach it to God’s people.

In Titus 1:9, Paul goes on to say an elder must be able to use the Bible to exhort others in sound doctrine.

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. -**Titus 1:9**

God puts this in place so those who make decisions for the local flock (for the sheep) do not do so not based on their own opinions or preferences; they are to teach not their own ideas but on the wisdom of the authority of the word of God.

There are a lot of things that you can and should have patience with your pastoral elders on but teaching falsehood/twisting the word of God or leading outside of God’s instruction is just not one of them. There is just too much at stake. Church, it is your job to help hold accountable your leaders to always lead God’s church according to God’s word.

**2. PROTECTING the Flock**

**Acts 20:28-31 Keep watch** over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. **29**I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **30**Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. **31**So **be on your guard!** Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

**Keep Watch:**

Verse 28 starts, "Keep watch,” then verse 31 says, "Be on your guard…"

**Elders must be alert, awake, open-eyed, and watchful.**

🡪**This is Paul's way of saying that the church is always threatened.** Satan’s workers never take vacations. Sin lurks at the door waiting for the moment of doctrinal or moral carelessness.

<>The command for the elders, therefore, is stay awake, be alert, know sound doctrine, and watch.

**But watch what?** Paul applies our watchfulness in two ways:

<a> Elders must watch themselves <b> and the elders must keep watch over the church

**<a> Elders must watch themselves**

**How is one a God-centered person? How does one watch over oneself??**

**1. He studies and knows God’s word.**

**2. He has other proven and mature believers around him to keep him accountable.**

This is why the office of elder is not limited to one pastoral elder, but the goal is to have more than one man who is ***raised up so that they can serve together!***

Now the second area we are be watchful for is..

**<b> Elders must keep watch over the church**

**1. Watchfulness for Satan’s advances and those opposed to God, looking to hurt His family.**

**1 Peter 5:8** Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

**2. Watchfulness for false teachers, so they can protect the church from false teachings.**

Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. **-Acts 20:30-31**

Some have said along the way that if feels like the leadership can be too picky or strict about biblical accuracy or identifying false teaching. But just read the scriptures and see the ongoing exhortation to do this diligently to protect the sheep.

**The third thing elders do is lead the flock!**

**3. LEADING the Flock**

The kind of leadership Jesus modeled for us and commissions our elders to is servant leadership

It is vital that we have the right kind of shepherd leadership, or as a church we are in trouble.

What does shepherd leadership look like?

**1. Elders lead by setting vision and direction.**

Biblical elders are responsible for providing the direction and vision of the church.

They must constantly be clarifying the direction and core beliefs of the church.

**The vision gives direction, motivates people, and keeps the flock focused on the gospel.**

**Proverbs 29:18** Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint…

**2. Elders lead by Governing and managing.**

Biblical elders are responsible for providing leadership with sound decision-making and oversight. They must set goals, make decisions, correct failures, and affect change in a gospel-centered way. This is why we see the model of congregational rule as unbiblical. No where do we see in scripture the ruling authority being given to or charged to the sheep nor do we even see the shepherds asking the sheep to make the final decisions.

**3. Elders lead by equipping and disciples-making.**

**One of the primary methods Jesus gave the church to grow and multiply is through discipleship!** Discipleship is based on doing life together so that those being trained up can see the example of the leaders that are pouring into them.

**1 Peter 5:2-3** Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care…by being examples to the flock.

**1 Cor. 11:1** Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

This is how the church is meant to grow deep into Christ: **qualified elders who are discipling leaders, who are discipling the flock, who will one day disciple others… And on and on.**

**Which brings us to the fourth thing that biblical elders must do:**

**4. Caring for the Flock**

**1. Elders provide direct care**

Biblical elders are responsible for providing the pastoral care to the church by meeting the practical and diverse needs of the flock.

Paul tells the Ephesian elders that they are to care for the weak and the needy.

**Acts 20:35 “***In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”*

***James 5:14*** *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

**Another way that elders provide pastoral care to the flock is in the area of counseling.**

**2. Elders are to equip the saints to provide care.**

**The simple truth is the elders will not be able to tend to every need or ministry the church requires.**

**This is why Jesus calls the Shepherds**  “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” **(Ephesians 4:12).**

**So, what do biblical elders do? Feed <> Protect <> Lead <> Care**

***The qualifications given in Scripture that elders are to meet and keep***

The qualifications found in the Scriptures are critical to an elder‘s ability to fulfill the elder office with excellence.

**Therefore, they should be taken extremely serious.**

**The two main places we see the qualifications for this office of leading the church are** in **1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1**

For the sake of time I want to just give a very brief overview…

Turn in your notes to the pages that list out the **qualifications for elder:**

**I. Motivation Qualifications:**

* ***Willing to serve as Elder***

An elder must be led by the Holy Spirit, and not out of obligation, to rightly prioritize one’s schedule and life to faithfully serve the full calling and duties of a pastoral elder. (1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28)

**II. Character Qualifications**

***1.) Above Reproach***

An elder must be blameless and presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)

***2.) Husband of one wife***

An elder must be a one-woman man who is sexually and emotionally pure and faithful. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6)

***3.) Temperate***

An elder must be self-controlled, and mentally and emotionally stable. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)

***4.) Prudent***

An elder must be sober, sensible, wise, and balanced in judgment and discretion. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)

***5.) Respectable***

An elder must be well-ordered, disciplined, and an honorable man worth following or imitating. (1 Timothy 3:2)

***6.) Hospitable***

An elder must be unselfish with his personal resources, welcoming, and generous with others. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)

***7.) Without Addictions (“Not given to drunkenness”)***

An elder must be free from excesses and living a God honoring lifestyle that doesn’t damage his testimony. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

***8.) Not Contentious (“Not violent”)***

An elder must be peaceable and not quarrelsome, or divisive. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

***9.) Gentle***

An elder must be kind, gracious, loving, and even tempered. (1 Timothy 3:3)

***10.) Not covetous (“Not a lover of money”)***

An elder must not be greedy for things or money and financially content and upright. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)

***11.) Not a new convert***

An elder must be spiritually mature with ongoing evidence of the fruit of the spirit, and tested. (1 Timothy 3:6)

***12.) Good Reputation***

An elder must be respected by non-Christians in society. (1 Timothy 3:7)

***13.) Not self-willed***

An elder must not be stubborn, insensitive, or prone to force opinions on others. (Titus 1:7)

***14.) Just***

An elder must be fair and impartial. Their judgment must be based on scriptural principles. (Titus 1:8)

**III. Abilities Qualifications:**

***1.) Worth following & imitating***

Elders must be able to provide a model in discipleship for others to follow and duplicate. (1 Peter 5:3, 1 Cor 11:1)

***2.) Able to teach***

Elders must be able to communicate sound biblical doctrine effectively & refute false teaching. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9, 2Timothy 4:2, 2:24)

***3.) Manages household well***

Elders must lead a well-ordered household, a healthy family life, and have obedient & respectful children (pertains to those whose children still live under parental authority). (1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1:7)

**Who has God ordained to lead the church?**

He has made it clear. **Those who have been prepared, tested and vetted.**

**Those who are qualified.** Thankfully God has given us great clarity on this matter, so we can follow His instruction.

Will you please join me in praying for those of us who are serving and that we remain qualified. The enemy would like nothing more than to see us become disqualified. And for those who are being prepared to serve in the future and that they become qualified.

**3. Qualified Deacons**

**Deacons:** Qualified and called men who have dedicated, assigned roles of service under the authority of the elders.

The New Testament text uses three primary words to refer to deacons: diakonos, which means "servant"; diakonia, which means "service"; and diakoneo, which means "to serve."

Now, we might use the word serve to describe anything from the start of a volley in a tennis match to a convicted criminal who "serves" a term in prison. The Greek words we see in the NT are used at least a hundred times and have just as wide a variety of meanings, but in general they refer to the kind of service that means **tending to the needs of another person.** What we see is only a few of them as referring to an official officeholder in the local church known as a deacon.

The best place we see this word used in this way is in**1 Timothy 3:8 and 12,**  where Paul lists the qualifications for "deacons." It is striking that Paul does not explain the duties of this office, which suggests that the Ephesian church already had experience with deacons. A few things we see is the fact that deacons do NOT need to be "able to teach" is a feature that sets them apart from the elders (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). Additionally, Deacons are never given authority like the elders, but instead are called to help the elders and serve the church by tending to their area of service faithfully.

The best place we see a model of deacons serving is when the seven are chosen in Acts 6 so let’s turn there as gather some more insight on this office of Deacon and then we will come back to 1 Timothy 3 and look at the qualifications of a Deacon.

**Acts 6:1-6** Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

The needs of Greek-speaking Jewish widows were being neglected. When the 12 apostles received news of this problem, they knew that something must be done to better tend to them. So, the elders had a practical need for a delegation of duties.

The seven men were chosen to be appointed to the task of overseeing the daily distribution of food. However, they did not just choose men who were willing to serve; they had to select men who were qualified and had good reputations and were Spirit-filled.

It is historically understood and agreed upon that Acts 6:1-6 records the ordination of “the seven” to diaconal service.

This passage indicates that all the persons appointed to the task of official service as a help to the elders not because of their popularity but because of their “good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.”

With that, let’s jump back to 1 Timothy and take a quick look at…

**The qualifications of a deacon:**

1 Timothy 3:8-13. Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. 9 They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. 11 Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. 12 Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. 13 For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

**Character Qualifications:**

* **Dignified (v. 8):** This term normally refers to something that is honorable, respectable, esteemed, or worthy, and is closely related to “respectable,” which is given as a qualification for elders (1 Tim. 3:2).
* **Not double-tongued (v. 8):** Those who are double-tongued say one thing to certain people but then say something else to others, or say one thing but mean another. They are two-faced and insincere gossips. Their words cannot be trusted, so they lack credibility.
* **Without addictions (v. 8):** A man is disqualified for the office of deacon if he is given to addictions. Such a person lacks self-control and is undisciplined. This man must model a life of moderation and not giving oneself to excessive or compulsive living. Lives a God honoring lifestyle that doesn’t damage testimony.
* **Not greedy for dishonest gain (v. 8):** This is seen in where a person’s treasures are. Are they satisfied with who they are in Christ and therefore they avoid pursuing the treasures of the world and dishonest gain or living beyond ones means.
* **Sound in faith and life (v. 9):** Paul also indicates that a deacon must “hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.” The phrase “the mystery of the faith” is simply one way Paul speaks of the gospel (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16). Consequently, this statement refers to the need for deacons to hold firm to the true gospel without wavering. Yet this qualification does not merely involve one’s beliefs, for he must also hold these beliefs “with a clear conscience.” That is, the behavior of a deacon must be consistent with his beliefs.
* **Tested and blameless (v. 10):** Paul writes that deacons must “be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” “Blameless” is a general term referring to a person’s overall character and is similar to “above reproach” used for the qualification of elders in 1 Timothy 3:2. Is there a proven disciplined track record, presenting no patterns of scriptural disobedience. In other words, they are not just obedient and blameless for a season but for in an ongoing way. The candidate’s personal background, reputation, and theological positions should be examined and proven over some viewable amount of time. This is when the leadership considers the person’s track record in life and the church.
* **Husband of one wife (v. 12):** The best interpretation of this difficult phrase is to understand it as referring to the faithfulness of a husband toward his wife. He must be a “one-woman man.” He is faithful to his wife both emotionally or physically.

**Ability Qualification:**

* **Manage children and household well (v. 12):** A deacon must be the spiritual leader of his wife and children. This means there is evidence of this in the God honoring obedience and order of the home and the children.

Quickly, there is also qualifiers given to the wives of deacons:

**Godly wife (v. 11):** According to Paul, deacons’ wives must “be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things.” Like her husband, the wife must be dignified or respectable. Secondly, she must not be a slanderer or a person who goes around spreading gossip. A deacon’s wife must also be sober-minded or temperate. That is, she must be able to make good judgments and must not be involved in things that might hinder such judgment. Finally, she must be “faithful in all things” (cf. 1 Tim. 5:10).

Next we look to the..

**The job of a deacon:** The Bible, does not narrowly indicate the function of deacons.

What is seen in the text is that Deacons are those especially called to serve to do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church, all for the good of the believers.

Deacons can be delegated responsibility for any area of ministry other than leading the church authoritatively. They are given a level of delegated authority from the elders but they do not have final authority as that is the job of the elders. The work of the deacons is seen more as areas of management in leading groups or ministry teams.

Elders lead ministry, deacons facilitate ministry, the congregation does ministry.

Deacons provide care and logistical and material support so that the elders can focus on the Word of God and prayer.

* I am excited to eventually vet and install deacons to assist the elders in handling the growing needs of our congregation.

Back to my football analogy.

We have seen that Jesus is the owner and the pastoral elders are the coaching staff

While the deacons are given an official work to do and they may be delegated a form of leadership in the practical matters of the church, they are still players and not coaches. They are players that are called to the roll of captain.

Speaking to the two offices God ordains for the local church in holy scripture…

The **1689 Baptist Confession of Faith** says in chapter 26.8

*A local church, gathered and fully organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. The officers appointed by Christ are overseers or elders, and deacons. They are to be chosen and set apart by the church called and gathered in this way, for the distinctive purpose of administering ordinances and for carrying out any other power or duty Christ entrusts them with or calls them to. This pattern is to be continued to the end of the age.*

Now, all that said, **what is a shepherd without any sheep?**

**Or a captain without his squad to lead and do play the game alongside?**

This is where the players come into view: the members of the church.

**4. Committed Members**

**Members (local church members):** The professing believers who make up the local church family. Church members are committed to Scripture and one another.

**Who are the Members of the Universal Body of Christ?**

1. **Ephesians 4:15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. **16**From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

<>Every true believer is a member of **Christ’s Body = “THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH” OR “THE KINGDOM OF GOD”**

<>Every non-believer is **NOT** a member of Christ’s Body because they do not yet have life in Christ. They are separated from God. Christ is not the Savior of a non-believer’s life; they do not submit rightly to His Lordship. **One who is not under the Head of Christ is not a member of His body!**

Our understanding of who belongs to Christ body is important but our emphasis is on those whom are members of the local body of Christ. This is the roll the Lord has called us to live out as ***committed members.***

Let me remind you of that catechism answer as it helps us look to the role of a committed member of the local body.

**Q108. What is the local church?**

The local church is a group of professing believers who have covenanted to unify together to worship and glorify God by fulfilling the commands and mission God has given to the body of Christ.

A couple key clarities we see in this definition. Committed members fo the local church are:

* professing faith in Christ
* covenanted in unity with the believers of that church
* obeying God’s commands and practicing repentance when they sin.
* fulfilling the mission God has given the local church.

There are four areas we have identified as important to why we “covenant together” in the local church:

1. **DEPENDABILITY:**Covenant Membership solidifies who within the local church body can be counted on as a dependable member who will use their time, giftedness, and finances to help that local church body fulfill their God given mission, vision and beliefs.

Scripture is clear that each part of Christ’s body has a work to do, a role to play, a needed contribution and participation that is ordained by God and instrumental in His design for life in His eternal family.

We see this beautifully laid out in **1 Corinthians 12:**

**1 Cor 12:12-13  12**The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. **13**For we were all baptized byone Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

–A beautiful picture of our oneness in Christ. Our true unity! \*Jump to vs. 19

**1 Cor 12:19-20** If they were all one part, where would the body be? **20**As it is, there are many parts, but one body.   - To form a collective, we are all different yet one body!

**In God’s redeemed family, everyone has a part to play that is important.**

***Each member, no matter ethnicity, gender, appearance, age, personality, giftedness, history… all stand united at the foot of the cross.***

**Everyone is given the new identity of saint,** of brother/sister, of child of the living God, of member of God’s eternal family.

**Look at…**

**Romans 12:3-6** For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them…

2. **UNITY:** Covenant Membership provides every member with a clear understanding of the

mission, vision and core beliefs of that local church body by which they can unify around and commit to carry out.

**Ephesians 4:3** Make every effort to **keep** the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

First of all, notice **it says “MAKE EVERY EFFORT”! That is “FIGHT FOR IT” language!**

In other words, don’t give up easily; FIGHT! Don’t try once and walk away; FIGHT!

Second, notice what it says next! **FIGHT TO “KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT”!**

When we are in Christ, UNITY is something that we receive; it is not something to be attained!

Only by the grace of God is unity even experienced in this life.

**We can’t earn our way into UNITY.** We have to simply **receive it in Christ** and then VALUE **it and live in accordance to it.**.

Let me say it this way: **Our command is to practice biblical, godly UNITY!**

**Matthew 5:9** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

Jesus calls the sons of God “peacemakers”! **What do peacemakers do? They fight for unity!**

3.**. COMMITMENT:**Covenant Membership allows every member to make a commitment to each other that they will fulfill the priorities and expectations according to an agreed upon written covenant.

One of the key areas we see God instruct the local church is in the practicing of the “One Anothers”:

Take a moment to review those with your group tonight.

We are to faithfully practice the things that God has given us in his word as “**committed** members.”

Church, as your shepherd I want to highlight the importance of our commitment to each other..

**God is not pleased with unbiblical dis-fellowships. Rather, it honors Him when we are committed to a biblical church and work through any hurts, misunderstandings, or other conflicts with other members or leadership.**

**In our day, we see far too much church changing.** I believe very few think they would ever be the ones to do it, until that one thing comes up that they feel justified in to break the commitment.

Please, in following the instruction of God’s word and the practice of the one-another’s, let us remain faithful to the local church. We must see that: A person or family is not just hurting the local church they leave for unbiblical reasons, they are dishonoring and disobeying God. Our commitment to each other really matters. Let’s Fight for this with all we have.

4. **ACCOUNTABILITY:**Covenant Membership gives every member a formal avenue by which they can invite that local church body and leadership to hold them accountable to what God has ordained for his children as they walk daily in Christ.

* **Accountability to the word!**

Jesus says again and again those who love him.. those who are truly his disciples will obey his commands.

* **Accountability to each other!**

Doing life together, Inviting others in to walk with you, Confess your sins to one another.

* **And Accountability to the Shepherds and leaders**

God has saved us into a body to do life together--to be in true community. And He has ordained for us to have elders to follow and submit to. That means we don’t go at it alone. This means we seek our leadership for counsel and help and accountability.

To finish tonight, look with me at the **Membership Covenant.**

This is where we get to agree with each other what we are committing to…

So we can be dependable, United, accountable, and committed to one another.

Prayer for our church in our obedience to these things..

Send to groups.