

Chapter 16 – How is a Christian Admitted into Membership? How is Membership Terminated?

Four Ways In, Four Ways Out

Acts 4:4 “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.”

Four ways a person can be brought into the membership:

- 1) Apply for baptism and membership as a new c_____.
- 2) Transferring a l_____ of membership from a sister church of like faith and practice.
- 3) A baptized convert without a c_____.
- 4) Biblical r_____ from a flagrant sin that resulted in excommunication
 - a) For the records of both churches to be updated.
 - b) For the testimony of Christ to be maintained.
 - c) For the reputation of the disciplined person to be restored
 - d) For rejoicing to take place

Four ways a person can be removed from the membership:

- 1) By letter.
- 2) By excommunication.
- 3) By death.
- 4) By voluntary withdrawal.

“It is sometimes said that a church is a voluntary society. This is true in a sense and only with an explanation. It is true that no external force or authority can compel the relation of membership to be formed or dissolved. The church can compel no one to unite with it, nor can the individual oblige the body to receive him. But it is not true that it is a matter merely optional and indifferent whether or not a believer identifies himself with the household of faith. He is under moral obligation to do that. It is for his own spiritual good to do it. It is one of the appointed means of grace. The church needs his presence and influence, and the cause of truth is futhered by a combination of Christian influence and effort. All are under law to Christ and are bound by sacred obligation to obey and please Him. He has ordained that His followers should associate themselves in those brotherhoods of faith and affection. ***A church, therefore, is more than a voluntary society. It is a society under law to Christ. Church membership, therefore, becomes a question of grave moment and should be carefully studied and well understood.***” - Edward Hiscox, pages 129-130.

Chapter 17 – When is Right to Leave a Church? And How Should it Be Done?

Six Valid Reasons, Eleven Invalid Reasons

1 Corinthians 14:40 “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

First four valid reasons that are based on the church itself.

- 1) When a church departs from the gospel and the preaching thereof.
- 2) When a church embraces and teaches heresy.
- 3) When a church tolerates open and scandalous sin in the church leadership or membership, and refuses to deal with it via biblical church discipline.
- 4) When a church changes doctrinal positions not consistent with the churches original Confession of Faith, doctrines, or practices.

Next two more valid reasons based on a change in the member.

- 5) When a member changes his major doctrinal position from that of his church.
- 6) When a member is providentially moved to another location far away from his or her present church.

The 11 invalid reasons.

These 11 reasons are outlined on pages 133-136.

Chapter 18 – Thoughts Upon the Church from Those Who’ve Gone Before

Quotes and conclusions

Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

May we all continue to love Christ more, see how He loves His church, and in turn may we love the church more too.