

Mutual Obligations

(Zeke Flores, Some material from outline by Richie Thetford)

Intro: *What's in it for me?*

- A. Words that everyone has asked at one time or another.
- B. Good question for the church and the individual to ask.
 - 1. Between the church & individual, there are mutual obligations that must be carried out.
 - 2. They are not suggestions, they are REQUIRED both the local church and the individual is to develop and be acceptable to God.
 - 3. Charles Simpson, in Pastoral Renewal, writes: "I met a young man not long ago who dives for exotic fish for aquariums. He said that one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. He explained that if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long yet fully matured. But, if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet. There are 6 inch individuals and 6 inch churches. They have never grown to maturity because they have never applied themselves to their responsibilities.
- C. What are these MUTUAL OBLIGATIONS?

I. The Obligations of the Church to the Individual

- A. Provide Teaching
 - 1. Each member has a right to expect sound teaching and God has provided for that in the church.
 - a. **Eph 4:11-12**
 - 2. Elders are responsible for feeding the flock but in their absence, the men of the church must make sure that sound teaching is provided.
 - a. **2 Tim 2:2, 1 Tim 4:6-8**
 - 3. Training should be provided for men who are willing to take part in the worship service.
 - a. Lead prayers, serve at the Lord's table, preach/teach, lead singing, personal work.
 - b. The local church must help each individual to grow & develop to their fullest.
 - (1) **Eph 4:14-15**

B. Provide Care & Benevolence

- 1. Occasionally, someone may undergo difficulties.
 - a. When one is a "needy saint," the church can help. It's one of the reasons we give weekly.
 - (1) **2 Cor 9:6-12**
- 2. The church is not a piggy bank, but when there is a genuine need, the church should step in and do what it can.

C. Keep Herself Pure and Free From Sin

- 1. Discipline is not for punishing the guilty offender. (God will take care of that.) It is to keep the bride of Christ spotless, free from sin and error.
 - a. **Eph 5:25-27**
- 2. The way this is done is by recognizing sin & error and dealing with it.
 - a. **Rom 16:17-18, 2 Thes 3:6, 1 Cor 5**
- 3. This is for the unrepentant, ungodly member who obstinately continues in sin.
 - a. The reason being that ungodly influence can affect everyone else. The church owes it to the faithful members to keep sin & error in check lest they become contaminated.

II. The Obligations of the Individual to the Church

- A. Living the Christian life purely is the main duty of the individual member toward the church.
 - 1. **2 Tim 2:19-22**
 - 2. Someone said, "The most beautiful sight this earth affords is a man or woman so filled with love that duty is only a name, and its performance the natural outflow and expression of the love which has become the central principle of their life."
 - 3. There is no room for hypocrisy in the church.
 - a. **1 Tim 4:12**
- B. Members owe the church perfect attendance if possible.
 - 1. **Heb 10:19-25**
 - 2. There are commands we *cannot* obey without assembling regularly.
 - a. **Heb 3:12-13, Rom 14:19**
 - b. A member of the church, who previously had been attending

services regularly, stopped attending. After a few weeks, the preacher decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The preacher found the man home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for the preacher's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace, and waited. The preacher made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the preacher took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember, placed it to one side of the hearth alone, and then sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then it's fire was no more. Soon it was cold and lifeless. Not a word had been spoken since the initial gathering. Just before the preacher was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately, it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the preacher reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back for worship services next Lord's Day."

C. Contribute to the work of the church

1. The church has an assigned work to do and the ONLY way it is carried out is by individuals doing their part.
 - a. **Eph 4:15-16**
2. Two questions EVERYONE needs to ask themselves:
 - a. *"What is my place here?"*
 - b. *"Am I in it?"*

Conc *Back to our question: "What's in it for me?"*

- A. For the church, her mission is being carried out, the cause of Christ is furthered, and her membership is strengthened
- B. For the individual, his faith is strengthened, his relationship with God is closer, and his conscience is clear.
- C. For both, their God is pleased!
- D. **INV**