

Our Covenant Mutual Member Responsibilities

... “You shall love your neighbor as yourself...” Mark 12:31b

“I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also should love one another...” John 13:34

(see also Romans 12)

Goal for Church Covenant Study

To understand and fulfill our covenant relationship with God (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) and each other.

Objectives

As a result of participating in this Covenant Discipleship Group learning experience, we will be able to discuss our covenant mutual member responsibilities by addressing the following questions:

- *What is Christ's relationship to us?*
- *What is our relationship to each other?*
- *What are our responsibilities in relation to each other?*
- *How do we fulfill our responsibilities to each other?*

Covenant Emphasis for this session

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life amid evil report and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

What is Christ's relationship to us?

In the covenant statement Christ is identified as our Lord and Savior; “Having been led as we believe by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior...”

What is our relationship to each other?

In this paragraph, we who have professed faith in Christ as Lord and Savior are identified as brothers and sisters who are responsible to care for and strengthen each other. The message of this paragraph is how God works for people through people. This is why we boldly declare that Christ is here for people through us.

What are our responsibilities in relation to each other?

Rick Morley, in **Going to Hell, Getting Saved, and What Jesus Actually Says**, argues that being saved according to the teachings of Jesus can be categorized into two basic strands. The first strand centers itself on right living, justice, and conforming to the Law of God. We find this most readily in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. The second strand emphasizes the importance of faith and belief, and it is primarily found in

the Gospel of John. And, if you look a little further, you'll find this strand in the Epistle of James and the second strand peppered throughout the epistles of Paul.

Our church covenant statement is primarily concerned with the first strand. It is an articulation of how we are as saved persons supposed to live out our faith. In this section, we are given guidance as to how we are to live out our faith in relation to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

How do we fulfill these responsibilities to each other?

We fulfill these responsibilities by ministering to each other. This section of the covenant gives us guidance as to how we are to minister to one another:

- *Watch over, pray for, exhort, and stir up each other:* We engage in these actions to encourage the spiritual growth of every member, to serve one another, to be sensitive to each other's needs, and to provide a source of comfort to one another.
- *Guard each other's reputation:* The church is rooted in the love of Christ. We demonstrate Christ's love by seeking unity, harmony, and the well-being of every member of the church family. Our main task is to build one another and not to tear one another down.
- *Participate in each other's joys and sorrows:* This entails the ability to show forth the love of Christ for one another in times of joys and sorrows in word and deed. "Bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)
- *Cultivate Christian courtesy:* We model Christian courtesy by treating others as those who are precious as we are in the sight of God. We are to do so consistently despite any circumstance we may encounter.
- *Be slow to give or take offense and ready for reconciliation:* Our ability to give or take offense represents our willingness to take the necessary steps for reconciliation. This requires self-control, sensitivity, and humility.
- *Live to the glory of God:* The greatest testimony to our relationship with God is our commitment to live to the glory of God. Relying upon the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, we make use of the resources of the faith--Word of God, tradition, experience, reason, prayer--to please God in everything we do.

Our relationship as brothers and sisters in Christ should always be the basis for how we minister to one another. We are responsible for ministering to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ and we have to determine how we minister to one another. There is no one set formula or plan. We are challenged to minister consistently. Our ministering to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ should be regarded as an opportunity to pass the faith to our children and to serve as a witness to those who are not part of the church. Our major concern is to do that which is pleasing to God.