

## **What's Your Job? The Responsibilities of a Church Member**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Job Number One!**

- A. If you had to summarize a church member's job in one sentence, how would you do it?
- B. Let's feel that a little bit by taking a minute to notice how often and how strongly this is expressed in Scripture.
  1. John 15:12
  2. John 13:34,35
  3. Romans 13:8-10
  4. Matthew 22:37-40
  5. Galatians 5:6
  6. Ephesians 5:1,2
  7. Colossians 3:14
  8. 1 Timothy 1:5
- C. And we have to think of course, what this means because there are lots of wrong definitions and understandings of love, but for now at least, we are going to focus on its importance. Listen to how a few different writers throughout church history have put it:
  1. Jerry Bridges, "Write down, either in your imagination or on a sheet of paper, a row of zeros. Keep adding zeros until you have filled the whole line on the page. What do they add up to? Exactly nothing! Even if you were to write a thousand of them, they would still be nothing. But put a positive number in front of them and immediately they have value. This is the way it is with our gifts and faith and zeal. They are the zeros on the page. Without love, they count for nothing. But put love in front of them and immediately they have value. And just as the number two gives more value to a row of zeros than the number one does, so more and more love can add exponentially greater value to our gifts."
  2. Paul Tripp, "I am deeply persuaded that the foundation for people transforming ministry is love... Love is what drove God to send and sacrifice his Son. Love led Christ to subject himself to a sinful world and the horrors of the cross. Love is what causes him to seek and save the lost, and to persevere until each of his children is transformed into his image. His love will not rest until all of his children are at his side in glory... Without it, [Christ's love for his own] we have no hope personally, relationally or eternally. This love is not a band-aid attempting to cope with a cancerous world. It is effective and persevering. It is jealous, intent on owning us without competition. It faces the facts of who we are and how we need to change and simply goes to work. Any hope for the problems we face-with our own hearts and with a dark and corrupt world-is found in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. This love offers hope to anyone willing to confess sin and cry out for transformation. Yet this is where we often get stuck. We want ministry that doesn't demand love that is well, so demanding. We don't want to serve others in a way that requires so much personal sacrifice. We would prefer to lob grenades of truth into people's lives rather than lay down our lives for them. But this is exactly what Christ did for us. Can we expect to be called to do anything less. The love of Christ is not only the foundation for our personal hope, but our

incarnation of that love is our only hope for being effective for Christ with others. Sadly many of us have forgotten this and we are resounding gong people in cymbal clanging relationships. There is a whole lot of noise but not much real change."

3. Francis Schaeffer, "Through the centuries, people have displayed many different symbols intended to show that they are Christians. They have worn marks in the lapels of their coats, hung chains about their necks, and even had special haircuts. But there is a much better sign — a universal mark that is to last through all the ages of the church till Jesus comes back. What is this mark? At the close of his ministry, Jesus made clear what was to be the distinguishing mark of the Christian until His return: A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. (John 13:33-35)"

### III. **III. How can we fulfill this responsibility?**

#### A. **Spend time with other church members.**

1. Show up on Sundays
  - a. One reason it's important to gather is because that's actually even what the word for church means in the New Testament.
  - b. A second reason is implicit in the gospel. Or maybe, you could say, it's an implication of the gospel.
    1. As someone's explained, "The gospel has a purpose— and that purpose is bigger than just saving you by yourself — it has the the purpose of calling out a people for God's own possession. This is the whole point of the good news — God forming a people for His glory and the good of the world."
  - c. A third reason we need to gather is more direct. It is not just an implication of the gospel, it's a command.
2. Seek time together

#### B. **Pray for one another.**

1. Paul's example is a model for us to imitate.
  - a. Romans 1:9
  - b. Colossians 4:12
  - c. Ephesians 6:18
2. The Bible tells us a number of different groups of people we should be praying for, but certainly one group we need to be praying for is each other. But, what should we be praying for each other?
  - a. Here are some suggestions:
    1. *Ask God to help others in the church develop deep relationships with other believers.* Romans 15:5,6
      - a. Pray that they would do the hard work of getting to know people that are different. Pray that people who are very different and have even some different particular convictions would not allow those differences to turn into bitterness and that they would be able to enjoy worshiping with other people here at church.
    2. *Ask God to increase their confidence in the gospel so that they will just have an overwhelming amount of hope and joy about all the good God's going to do them in the future.* Romans 15:13
      - a. Pray that they would see how good it is to trust in Jesus.
      - b. Pray that God would help them be really, really sure about all the good He has in store for them.

- c. Pray that the gospel wouldn't be mere words to them, but that they would delight in it.
  - d. Pray that they would not think of the gospel as the A,B,C's of the Christian life but the A to Z of the Christian life.
  - e. Pray that they would be able to keep the gospel at the center of their lives.
  - f. Pray that they wouldn't be distracted by minor issues from the gospel.
3. *Ask God to give them discernment and help them not to make wrong choices and specifically that they would not listen to false teachers who are telling them lies but that they would be able to identify and trust those who are telling them the truth. 2 Corinthians 13:7*
- a. Pray that God would give them the ability to spot when someone is telling them lies.
  - b. Pray that God would give them a taste for the truth.
  - c. Pray that God would quiet false teachers in our community.
  - d. Pray that God would help them to love godly teachers.
4. Ask God to open their hearts and minds to understand better what they have waiting for them when Jesus returns, how certain and big all the good God's planning for them really is, and the spiritual power that is at work in their lives presently. Ephesians 1:15-19
- a. Pray that the Spirit of God would reveal more of God's character to them.
  - b. Pray that God would help them know truth deep down in their hearts, not just the facts, but how those facts impact their lives, that they would love the truth.
  - c. Pray that God would give them more assurance about how good they have it in Christ and how good they are going to have it in Christ, and how much He is at work in their lives, that He would help them appreciate what He is doing in their lives, and that they would know they have enough to obey God and do what He's called them to do.
5. *Ask God to give them the inner spiritual strength they need to know how much He loves them and that they would be convinced on a daily basis about the fact that Jesus is really for them and that He won't give up on them. Ephesians 3:14-19*
- a. Pray that God would expose self-righteousness in their hearts and help them to hate it.
  - b. Pray that God would keep them from smuggling the things they do into their hearts as the basis of their justification.
  - c. Pray that God would give them a deeper sense of their own unworthiness and a greater appreciation for the cross.
  - d. Pray that God would help them to value God's love for them more than anyone else's.

- e. Pray that the bigness of God's love for them would stagger them.
  - f. Pray that God would give them daily encouragements from the gospel.
  - g. Pray that God would give them friends who would point them to Christ.
  - h. Pray that they would see how God is working for their good in their daily life.
  - i. Pray that they would have a rock-solid assurance that they belong to Christ and that Christ will never leave them or forsake them.
6. Ask God to help them learn how to love other people better and that God would enable them to love other people more and that they would know how to love other people in a way that is really good for the other person and not in a way that actually does harm to the person they are attempting to love. Philippians 1:9
- a. Pray that they would be freed from self-absorption.
  - b. Pray that they would develop an interest in other people.
  - c. Pray that they would experience affection for people.
  - d. Pray that God would help them think about how to make sacrifices for others.
  - e. Pray that God would give them the ability to know what to do that will really be a blessing to others.
7. *Ask God to help them know what He wants for them in every area of their lives and that they would become people who know how to take the Word of God and apply it to the specific issues they face in day to day life.* Colossians 1:9
- a. Pray that they wouldn't be satisfied with a little knowledge of God's Word.
  - b. Pray that the Holy Spirit would open their minds to the Scripture so they can understand it and see how it applies to what they are going through.
  - c. Pray that their understanding of Scripture wouldn't be generic, but that they would be able to take the truths they are learning and actually put them into practice in a way that God intended.
  - d. Pray that they would be able to explain the Scripture accurately to others.
  - e. Pray that they would be convinced that God's will is better than their own.
  - f. Pray that they would be convinced that God has given them what they need to know in His Word.
8. *Ask God to enable them to believe and continue to hold on to the gospel and not let go even in the face of all kinds of doubts and persecution. Ask God to encourage them and not to allow the trials and difficulties that come along with serving Christ discourage them too much and that they would be able to keep on doing the right thing for a long time even when it is hard.* Colossians 4:12, 2 Thessalonians 2:17

- a. Pray that they would develop a deep conviction about the truthfulness of the gospel.
  - b. Pray that they would be able to keep their eyes on Christ when they are criticized for doing the right thing.
  - c. Pray that God's approval would be more important to them than the approval of other people.
  - d. Pray that they would see the value of obedience even when obedience doesn't seem to be making their life easier.
9. *Ask God to help them develop a pattern of fleeing from sin and doing what is right. Specifically ask God to help them be obedient in every area of their life. 1 Thessalonians 3:11; 5:23*
- a. Pray that God would keep them from making excuses for their sin.
  - b. Pray that God would give them friends who will be willing to confront them when they are in sin.
  - c. Pray that God would help them to see their sin.
  - d. Pray that God would help them confess their sin.
  - e. Pray that God would help them see what righteous actions they can put on in the place of their sin.
  - f. Pray that God would help them develop a pattern of doing the right thing for a long period of time.
  - g. Pray that they would have friends in their life who are patient with them as they are in the process of changing.
  - h. Pray that God would keep them from being too embarrassed to ask for help if they need assistance in turning from their sin.
  - i. Pray that God would give them a desire for holiness.
  - j. Pray that God would enable them to submit to Him in every area of their life.
  - k. Pray that God would help them turn from the sins they love most and that there wouldn't be parts of their life that they are holding out from God.
10. *(10)Ask God to enable them to live lives that match up with what they say they believe to be true about Jesus and that God would help them be fruitful in their work for Christ and that they would make a long lasting impact as they seek to serve Him. 2 Thessalonians 1:11*
- a. Pray that God would help them to really get excited about the truths they say they believe.
  - b. Pray that they would have opportunities to use their gifts for God's glory.
  - c. Pray that they would see fruits from their service for Christ.
11. *(11)Ask God to give them an inner peace, a contentment in God's sovereignty that doesn't go up and down, a joy and peace in the middle of every thing that comes their way. 2 Thessalonians 3:16*
- a. Pray that God would help them believe He is in control.

- b. Pray that they would learn to cast their anxieties upon God.
- c. Pray that God would help them not to get too freaked out by the difficulties they face on an everyday basis.
- d. Pray that they would be able to be joyful and thankful even when things are not going the way they would like them to.
- e. Pray that God would help them not to worry or to be overwhelmed with fear.

**C. Share the gospel with unbelievers and defend the faith from those who distort it.**

1. Look at the following passage and notice the command and who it is addressed to.
  - a. Jude 3
2. In the next passage, again notice who Paul is writing to and his expectations of them.
  - a. Galatians 1:6-8
3. Who is the author talking to in the next passage, and what does he command them to be able to do?
  - a. 1 Peter 3:15

**D. Pursue unity with other members of the church.**

1. The importance of unity is made clear in the following passages:
  - a. Ephesians 4:1-4
  - b. Philippians 2:1-3
  - c. Romans 14:19
  - d. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11
2. Why do you think unity among believers might be so important?
  - a. It reflects how God designed the world to be and how He is going to make it.
  - b. As believers He has made us one, so unity is reflection of that.
  - c. It's a fruit of love. So, saying we love each other without pursuing unity is kind of a contradiction.
  - d. It's just so unique. The kind of unity we can experience as Christians is ultimately impossible in the world.
  - e. The damage disunity does to the cause of Christ.
  - f. How many other sins are the result of disunity.
3. If unity is so important, what are some specific ways that believers can pursue unity? Let me read and comment on four steps John Owen gives.
  - a. "Labour, by prayer and faith, to have our hearts and spirits thoroughly seasoned with that affectionate love which our first rule requireth.
  - b. Carefully observe, in ourselves or others, the first beginnings of strife; which are as the letting out of water, and, if not prevented, will make a breach like the sea.
  - c. Work hard at applying ourselves to the removal of the first appearance of divisions; and in case of not prevailing, to consult the church.
  - d. Daily to strike at the root of all dissension, by labouring for universal conformity to Jesus Christ.
4. Now, maybe I can even make this more practical. One of your jobs as a church member is to pursue unity by putting up with other members weaknesses, failings, problems with meekness, patience, pity and a willingness to help; which is the opposite of how we are trained to act. We are trained to ignore those who are difficult. But God's calling us to be

different. Look at these passages with me and tell me what stands out to you:

- a. Ephesians 4:32
  - b. Matthew 18:21
  - c. Romans 15:1,2
  - d. Colossians 3:12-14
  - e. Proverbs 25:2
5. I appreciate this quote by John Owen. Do you want to walk in the footsteps of Christ? Do you desire to follow Jesus? Then know this. "Meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, hiding, covering, removing of offences, are the footsteps of Christ. Seest thou thy brother fail? pity him. Doth he continue in it? earnestly pray for him, admonish him. Cannot another sin but you must sin too? If you be angry, vexed, rejoiced, alienated from, you are partner with him in evil, instead of helping him. Suppose thy God should be angry every time thou givest cause, and strike every time thou provokest him. When thy brother offendeth thee, do but stay thy heart until thou takest a faithful view of the patience and forbearance of God towards thee, and then consider his command to thee to go and do likewise. Let, then, all tenderness of affection and bowels of compassion towards one another be put on amongst us, as becometh saints. Let pity, not envy; mercy, not malice; patience, not passion; Christ, not flesh; grace, not nature; pardon, not spite or revenge,—be our guides and companions in our conversations."

**E. Be set apart from the world and live a distinctively holy life.**

1. Be separate from the world.
  - a. Ephesians 5:8,11
  - b. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
  - c. Proverbs 14:7
  - d. 1 John 1:6,7; 2:15-17
2. What we do not mean when we talk about separating from the world?
  - a. Romans 9:3
  - b. 1 Corinthians 7:13
  - c. 1 Corinthians 5:10
  - d. 1 Timothy 2:1,2
  - e. Galatians 6:10
3. So what do we mean?
  - a. Romans 12:1,2:
  - b. Ephesians 5:3,4,6-8,10,11
4. Of course, holiness is more than just staying away from certain conversations or relationships. It also involves pursuing obedience to God in every area of our lives. And we could talk for a long time about this. But, as a pastor, I've often been told, that one of the most important things I can do for my congregation is be holy. And really you should think that way as a church member as well. What is God calling you to do? Be holy. And that's a big way you can be a blessing to others in the church and even advance the cause of Christ.

**F. Talk with one another about the truth and how to apply it.**

1. Now, the performance of this duty of mutual edification is incumbent on the saints,—
  - a. Ordinarily, Eph. 4:29, 5:3, 4; Heb. 3:13. Believers, in their ordinary daily converse, ought to be continually making mention of the Lord, with savoury discourses tending to edification, and not waste their opportunities with foolish, light, frothy speeches that are not convenient.

- b. Occasionally, Luke 24:14; Mal. 3:16. If any thing of weight and concernment to the church be brought forth by Providence, a spiritual improvement of it, by a due consideration amongst believers, is required.
- c. By assembling of more together, by appointment, for prayer and instruction from the word, Acts 10:24, 12:12; Job 2:11; Eph. 5:19; James 5:16; Jude 20; 1 Thess. 5:14.

G. And there's more. Here are some others that Owen mentions:

- 1. Bearing one another's burdens
- 2. Giving financially to those who are in need
- 3. Continuing to believe
- 4. Refusing to show partiality
- 5. ...

IV. Conclusion

V.