

My Responsibilities To My Congregation

Introduction. Bob Feller, a pitcher for the Cleveland Indians, had already thrown a no-hitter and won 107 games in the major leagues when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Feller volunteered to fight for his country, and after the war Bob returned to pitching and had three no-hitters, 12 one-hitters, and won 266 games. But his years of military service cost Bob much of the fame he deserved. When baseball fans elected the All-Century Team in 1999, Bob and his 266 victories were ignored in favor of two other pitchers. Some suggest Feller may be the most underrated baseball player of all time. Feller was once asked if he regretted his wartime service. "No," he said, "I've made many mistakes in my life. That wasn't one of them."

We we are under a solemn obligation of service to the absolute extent of our ability (Matthew 16:24). Christians know why they are members of the church. Salvation and membership in the church go hand in hand (Acts 2:41, 47). The same action that saves us from sin also grants us membership in the Lord's body. This is not coincidental. But do we know how to merge these two realities? Do we know our specific duties to our congregation? If God meant for us to be members of a local body (Acts 9:32; 26:10; Romans 1:7; 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 14:33; 16:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2, 4; Hebrews 13:24), then what are my specific responsibilities to that body?

The very use of the word "body" indicates that we have a distinctive relationship and duty to one another. No one member is more important than another (1 Corinthians 12:18-20, 27). No one person can accomplish the tasks that God has set forth, just like no one member of my physical body can perform all the tasks necessary to get through a day. The same is true with the church. With this in mind, we are going to investigate what we owe our congregations.

I. **My Good Example**

- A. A Christian should want their congregation to radiate a wholesome moral and spiritual influence in the community. Therefore, I owe it the example of a good life. I am the light and the salt of the earth, but if I lose that influence I am worthless (Matthew 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:12).
- B. Titus 2:12 means staying away from everything that is specifically sinful (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Revelation 21:8), and 1 Thessalonians 5:22 means fleeing everything that is questionable (1 Timothy 6:11).

II. ***My Greatest Concern***

- A. If you went to a congregation that broke into little huddles after services and only a couple of people spoke to you, would you go back? A Christian should want visitors who enter the door of the building to feel at home, and then return to learn more of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are our guests. I must make them feel welcome!
- B. I owe it to them and to the congregation to show myself friendly (Proverbs 18:24). I cannot stand back and wait for other members to greet them, I have to take the initiative (Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:10; 3 John 5-8). People will only go where they are wanted. There is no reason to wonder why people will not return to our congregation if no one has been friendly or shown no genuine appreciation for them being with us.

III. ***My Talents And Love***

- A. I want my congregation to grow and multiply in number. Therefore, I need to teach and persuade, bringing and inviting people to our assemblies (Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 2:1-2). Too many give up after one try or decide that they are "not any good with people." If there is one area where churches of Christ can generally be better, it is in teaching the gospel. Instead of giving up, I want to increase my talents, and learn to water and plant effectively (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 3:6; Romans 10:1).
- B. Furthermore, my congregation cannot thrive in a frigid atmosphere (cf. Galatians 5:13). Jesus emphasized the need for love before He died (John 15:12). My congregation will never flourish around jealousy, gossip, and hate; it will only grow by love. Moreover, I must also love the truth (Psalm 119:16,24, 47, 72, 82, 97, 113, 127, 140, 159, 163, 167, 174; Jeremiah 15:16; Titus 1:9). To help guide my congregation, I must make the truth the focus of my undying love. This means that I will correct error when I see it and encourage my brethren to walk in the "old paths" (Jeremiah 6:16).

IV. ***My Financial Assistance***

- A. A congregation has financial obligations which must be taken care of at regular intervals. Whether I give or not, the obligations must be paid. If it is fair for my congregation to pay its obligations each week, it is fair and necessary for me to give each week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). It is my duty of faithful stewardship to financially help with the work of our local congregation (Luke 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:10).
- B. Giving is a very practical measurement of my spiritual priorities (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). I cannot be greedy and withhold the blessings that

God Himself has given me and expect to please Him (Proverbs 3:9-10). Though circumstances may force me to be absent at times, my contribution still needs to be given to the treasury of the church.

V. ***My Faithful Attendance***

- A. The very existence of any congregation depends upon the attendance of its members. In fact, attendance is the life of the church! For this reason, I must attend the assemblies -- ALL the assemblies I can. How glad are you to come and worship with God's people (Psalm 27:4; 84:2, 10)? I could not live with myself if I knew that my congregation died because I would not attend the assemblies (Luke 24:52-53).
- B. Many of us are content to be "Sunday morning" Christians. How can I possibly convince God that my relationship with Him is the most important one in my life if I embrace opportunities to miss (Acts 2:42; cf. James 4:17)? How can I make God believe that I love Him if I will not gather with His saints at every possible chance? Putting kingdom business first shows true conversion (Luke 14:26).

Conclusion. An anonymous proverb says, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." I want to be involved. I have to play my part in the incomparable work of building up the body of Christ which He purchased with His own blood (Ephesians 4:12; Acts 20:28). If I am not willing to help my congregation become "*fitly joined together*" in love (Ephesians 4:16), I am not worthy to wear the name "Christian."