

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP: ITS ESSENCE AND NECESSITY

Monday Evening Discussion

I. Concerning becoming a member

1. We have hesitated to set chronological age norms for persons to become members. Should we set spiritual/intellectual norms?

How much doctrinal/ethical conformity would we require?

2. *Since* If fellowship is essence of membership, should we admit persons to membership who may not know what fellowship means or what a covenant relationship involves?

3. Baptism/membership sequence is questioned by some. Should we insert a waiting period between baptism and membership, for nurturing and maturing?

4. Some question procedure of becoming members. Is the criterion to make procedure meaningful or must we attempt to make it easy and pleasant?

II. Dual Membership Rolls - Some churches place members not in fellowship and work on an "inactive member" roll. These names are not reflected in their conference commitments.

Two questions:

1. Is this practice fair to the brotherhood? *no*
2. Is such a roll not an evasion of responsibility to the persons whose names appear on it. *yes*

III. Making Membership Meaningful. A number have stressed the necessity for this:

1. Meaning can only come when members are ready, as in a close family, to unveil hearts to each other.

2. Make more of process of becoming members - not only on part of person coming in but also on part of receiving church body. Stress responsibility of receiving body.
3. Does definite discipline (in love) not make membership more meaningful.
4. Emphasis must be on quality of fellowship rather than on quantity of members.

IV. The Larger Church and the Small Group: General consensus that small group not necessarily in opposition to larger church.

1. How can the larger church successfully and profitably nurture the smaller groups in its midst?
2. How can the hazards of the small group be avoided by the loving and guiding concern of the larger body?