

EXIT ETIQUETTE

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New church members understand *Entrance Etiquette*—how to join a church. However very few understand *Exit Etiquette*—how to leave a church.

I. MEMBERSHIP VERSUS COVENANT

Membership is a necessity placed on groups to conduct business. It has its responsibilities as well as privileges. As necessary as membership may be in our present society it is not a biblical concept. The biblical concept is that of covenant or being grafted/adopted into a family.

In a home when someone is going out of the house common courtesy requires that we intimate someone of our departure, whereabouts and relating logistics—*exit etiquette*.

However, in a church, since members do not understand covenant they feel they can leave a church without following any protocol or *exit etiquette*. Why? Because they fail to see the covenantal and familial biblical concepts.

More than a member we are in covenant.

We are “family members”!

That is why we call it our “home church”.

II. QUESTIONS PROSPECTIVE AND NEW MEMBERS NEED TO ASK THEMSELVES

- A. Why am I here?
- B. Is this going to be home unless the Lord moves me?
- C. Does my personal passion coincide with the vision of this church?
- D. Are there opportunities for me to utilize my God given gifts?

III. LEGITIMATE REASONS FOR LEAVING A CHURCH

- A. Geographical relocation making commuting to church impractical
- B. Drastic change of vision in the church that may not be compatible with reasons for joining
- C. Doctrinal heresy
- D. Being sent out by the church as a church planter, missionary, evangelist etc.

IV. ISSUES TO CONSIDER WHEN LEAVING A CHURCH

- A. Have I followed protocol and sharing with those given oversight of my well being? These could be elders, deacons, cell leaders, departmental Pastors or Pastors.
- B. If it is due to conflict and controversy, have I verified all the facts directly from the source?
- C. Do I have unforgiveness in my heart?
- D. Am I angry?
- E. Am I leaving because it is *my* decision or am I being negatively influenced?
- F. Am I a carrier of negativity from this church to the next church?
- G. Am I leaving in such a way that I can return to this church family?
- H. Have I been courteous?
- I. Have I been respectful of godly authority?
- J. Have I said negative things to others in the church?
- K. What do I expect this church to do when I tell them I am leaving?
- L. If I were the Pastor or a senior leader in the church, what would I expect as exit etiquette from those choosing to leave?

V. EXIT ETIQUETTE

- A. Never leave with unresolved issues of anger, bitterness and unforgiveness.
- B. Always do your best to speak with those in oversight about your plans. Don't go AWOL.
- C. Do not make a scene or production out of your leaving.
- D. When you leave, leave. Do not keep meddling back in the place you chose to leave.
- E. Do not try to influence others to follow you in leaving.
- F. Leave in such a way that your godliness will be exemplary, you will be missed and always welcomed back. The test? If you see a church leader in a restaurant, grocery store or bank there will be no awkwardness—because there is no unfinished business.

CONCLUSION: How you leave is as important as how you come in.