

**JESUS AND HIS CHURCH (PART 3 – MEMBERSHIP)**  
**March 6, 2016 morning service**  
**Ephesians 5:22-33**

Well too often it's just all about me, isn't it? Yeah. Well church is not about you and it's not about me. It's about the Lord. Then it's about us collectively. We come today in this third message out of Ephesians 5:22-33. Jesus and His church. We saw His mystery. Then we saw the holiness of His church. Today we come to look at the membership of the church. So let's find in our Bible Ephesians 5. We'll begin reading in verse 22 and we'll read through verse 33. Hear now the word of our great God.

*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church [verse 30], because we are members of His body [because we are members of His body]. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.<sup>1</sup>*

Paul uses the illustration of the husband and the wife coming together, two becoming, one as the backdrop of the church. Christ the head, we the body. We've looked in this passage for the last two weeks and today being the third seeing first of all that *mysterion*, the mystery that he spoke about down at the end of this passage. Then he said there would be no spot or wrinkle. We looked at the sanctification or the holiness and how He makes us more like Himself.

Today we come to look at the makeup of the church, the membership of the church if you will. In verse 30 we are members of His body. There are three key words that I want us to see. You know, joining the church, becoming a part of the church – those that are brought to church young as I was, we start down there in the preschool area as little babies. Tonight there'll be babies all across this front. We dedicate children. We've got an absolute revolution going on down in the preschool building. They just sent me a text. It popped up there this morning. It said, "We had 261 down there in that group." There's 3 or 4 teachers that are checking in at the psych ward at a local hospital this afternoon. Man, they've got kids everywhere.

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Dr. Criswell, my old mentor at First Dallas used to say, "When you take a baby to the nursery you ought to pin an offering envelope to their diaper." Well of course today we don't pin anything. We stick it. We don't even give with an offering envelope. Those people down there, they give online but you get the picture. He's saying you grow up a child and then one day that child comes to big church and they start seeing baptism and the Lord's Supper and ask questions. They're around people and they sing. Then one day when they're 8 or 10 or 14 or whenever, they walk down this aisle. They weren't a church member. They were a member of a connection group, of a preschool but they become a member of the church when they believe and they are baptized and then they belong to the family.

This morning I want to talk to you about membership. Many of you have been coming here a long time and you've never joined this church. Today's your day. Many of you have come and you've never been saved. Today's your day. You've been here looking and worshiping and singing but you've done what that lady did with baptism. Today is your day to get ready to do that. Three words I want us to see this morning about membership in the church.

The first word is the word believe. Romans 10:9-10 speaks to us about that when Paul says to the church at Rome that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and do what? Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness. With the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Verse 9, you believe. Verse 10, with the heart a person believes. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God has loved you. He's done His part. Jesus has become flesh. Jesus has gone to the cross. God raised Him from the dead. God has done that for you. He sits at the right hand of the Father. He sent the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit convicts you of your sin today and of your lostness and your lawlessness and your unrighteousness. He says, "Come be saved." If you will believe, this text says, if you'll believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, you'll be saved. You must believe.

What does it mean to believe? It means to put one's full trust in Jesus and Jesus alone. Everyone in this room right now, except for me as best I can tell, you're putting your full faith and trust in a pew. You've got all your weight on that pew. You believe it's going to hold you. When we were over in the old building, there was a pew or two over there that I didn't have faith in. As a matter of fact, if I sat down and looked down and there was two big old boys, I'd move over to the next section because I wasn't sure it was going to hold me up. That's what you do when you trust Jesus. You put your full trust in Him. Not 90%, not 99%, you put 100% of your trust by faith that Jesus is the one that's going to take you to heaven when you die and forgive your sin while you are alive.

Faith is putting your full trust in Jesus. It's by faith that you repent and you trust Jesus Christ alone. You are going away from God. Then you turn and you repent and you go toward God. You believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In faith you ask Jesus to save you. You say, "Lord, save me. Lord, forgive me. Lord, save me. Be

merciful. Redeem me.” As children we used to hear the phrase, “Ask Jesus to come into your heart.” Well we know He doesn’t come into your heart but within your inner man and your spirit. “God, save me and come in and forgive me and fill me and raise me from my spiritual death.” Believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I did that when I was a 10-year-old boy. Somebody said, “Did you know enough?” I knew enough to know I was lost and needed to get saved. I talked last Monday night to a grown man that knew enough to know he was lost but he wasn’t willing to believe. Two weeks ago I talked to another elderly gentleman and he said, “Yes, I want to do it. I want to believe on the name of the Lord Christ.” Hallelujah. To believe.

So this morning I want us just to stop right here and here’s what I want you to do with me. If you’re on your phone just quit that. If you’re fiddling around writing a note, quit that. If you’re daydreaming out there somewhere, come back here to me. Here’s what I want you to do. I want everybody just to drop your head, bow your head, close your eyes, and I want you to do one of two things.

Number one, if you’re a saved man or woman, I want you to thank God for saving you. I want you just to thank Him and whoever told you about Jesus, I want you just to thank Him that God saved you. If you are not a Christian right now, I want you to believe. If you’re ready to be saved, I want you – you say, “Preacher, I wouldn’t know what to say.” Here’s what you say, “Lord, I’m a sinner. Save me.” You don’t have to say it out loud. Within your spirit just say, “Lord, save me.” If you’re ready and the Spirit of God’s drawing you and wooing you today. If you’re not ready, don’t, but if you’re ready to be saved ask Him to save you right now. Just say, “Lord, save me.” In the name of Jesus, say Amen. Amen.

If you have believed, you thank Him. Some of you have believed right now and at the end of this service I’m going to ask you to tell me you did that by putting your name on that card and putting it in the offering plate. I’m going to write you a letter this week and we’re going to get you ready to be baptized and we’re going to help you follow up as you grow as a disciple. If you’re going to be a part of the church, number one, you must believe.

The second word is baptism. Baptism. If you’re going to believe, Amen, but then you follow that by baptism. The second step of joining a church is not only to believe but then to be baptized. Acts 2:41 says: *So then, those who had received his word were [baptizo] baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.* My Lord, wouldn’t you have liked to have been in church that Sunday? Three thousand people that were baptized, to be placed under the water.

The first little church I pastored was New Lebanon Baptist Church and we’d have a few people saved and we’d save them up. Then we’d go down to Sportsman’s Lake. If it was in the winter we’d go over to Macedonia #2. That was the name of the church. It’s amazing how Baptists plant churches. There was a Macedonia and then there was

a split and there was New Macedonia. Then there was another church split and there was New Macedonia #2. You know, we have Bethel and New Bethel. My favorite one is Harmony and then New Harmony. This church named Harmony and we didn't like them so we started New Harmony over here.

Well we went down to Macedonia #2 and we'd go in and in their baptistery you had to open up the floor. You moved the pulpit and there was a trap door. It always scared me to preach in that church but they'd move that big deal and the baptistery was under the pulpit and they'd fill it up with water and then you'd walk down into that through steps and you'd baptize people right underneath the pulpit. I love that. That was in the winter. In the summertime we went to Sportsman's Lake.

The first time that I ever baptized anybody at Sportsman's Lake, I'll never forget it. I'm a young 20-something year old college student pastoring a church. They hadn't baptized many people and folks started getting saved and the Martin boys got saved. So we went down to Sportsman's Lake and I put on my jeans and just before I started in the water, one of the deacons said, "Woah, preacher." I said, "What?" He brought out a cane fishing pole and he started beating the top of the water. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, we just always like to make sure all the snakes move out before we baptize." I said, "Well if you were a real servant and a man of God, you'd have gone in there and give me the pole and let you go in and I'd beat the water." Ah baptism. You know, we'd put those people under. I always liked baptizing in a creek or especially a lake. If you had a great big person you could just move out a little deeper and it was easier. If you had little people you'd move in where it was shallow. Here you've just got one size fits all.

Baptism. Why be baptized? Well the Bible commands it. You saw that there. That you should believe and be *baptizo*, to dip. What in the world does that mean? Well baptism is a picture. It's a drama that we like to see here every service. It pictures our Lord's work for us. Jesus died and they put Him in a tomb and when you go under the water you're placed like in a grave and then you come up. It's like He rose. He died and He rose. It pictures the work of Christ in His death and resurrection. Baptism is our identity with Him. We are saying, "We die to ourselves and we're raised to walk in newness of life."

Baptism is our public, unashamed, demonstrated love for Christ. We identify with Jesus. Jesus was baptized by immersion. That's the way I wanted to be baptized. Now some of you sit in this room today and you'd join this church except you'd have to be baptized because you were sprinkled as an infant. I'm not throwing rocks at that but let me tell you, that is not New Testament baptism. Baptism is not something your parents do for you, it's something you do to honor Christ yourself. If you can't remember your baptism, then you need to take a step and say, "I'm ready to take my stand and be baptized."

After the early service one of our sweet choir members, Brother Jon, an older lady – you say, "How old?" Well she's older than me, alright? That's enough. She

came and she said, "Pastor, I want to tell you a story." I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "I've been coming to this church for years." She said, "I was sprinkled as an infant but I came. I was in the choir. I was here. I just loved this church." She said, "You know, a few years ago I just decided, it's time." She said, "I walked down. Can you imagine a woman my age being baptized all these years later but I wanted to be a part of the church so I did it." She said this to me, Brother Jon. She said, "Pastor, I've never done this before in my life but I was baptized on a Sunday night. Then next morning I woke up and I never do this but I sat up in the bed." She said, "Even before I could think, coming out of my mouth was the song 'Sweet, Sweet Spirit.'" She said, "I'll tell you, I believe that God honored my obedience and put a song within my spirit that I had never had before."

I didn't ask her if I could tell that. I just stole it straight out. I'm not promising you that God will give you a song but I'm promising you this. There'll be the sweet trust and calm assurance of obedience when you walk as God tells you to walk and that you are baptized in a public unashamed demonstration of your love for Christ. You need to set that time. You can do it tonight. You can do it next Sunday. You might want to bring your family. It'll be a great time. Bring all your family to say, "We're going to do that," and to come and be baptized.

I'll never forget that little girl. She's now a grown woman and has kids of her own that when I baptized her at New Lebanon way back there in that first church when I was a college kid, she asked me this question, "Pastor, how long are you going to keep me under there?" I said, "Just that long. Just under the water and raise you up." Now there's some of you that I keep under just a little longer. I've never known anybody to die being baptized but I've known many to be sacred almost to death but when they come out of there, walking in obedience, it's a joyful day. Amen.

How do you join a church? You believe. How do you join a church? You baptize. There's a third word. Not only do we believe and that we're baptized but then we belong. We belong. Belonging is the third word that I want you to see. We belong to the church. Hebrews 10:25 says: *not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.* As you see the day of the Lord coming, you ought to be worshipping more and more and more and more. We cut out services but the closer we get to the coming of God the more we ought to be getting together, assembling ourselves together and belonging.

That means that you should move your letter. That's what Baptists call it. We move our letter. Some of you have come here from Atlanta and you need to move your letter to Olive. Some of you have come here from Dallas and you need to move your letter. Some of you from Orlando, you move your letter. Some of you from Chumuckla, you need to move your letter. Your membership. Where's that come from? In the word of God in the book of Acts we find moving your letter. It's in the book of Acts chapter 18. Look with me. Right here in Acts 18 we're talking about Apollos – Luke wrote it – chapter 18, verse 24 the Bible says:

*Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John [Now he had not been baptized in Jesus' name. He was following John the Baptist and had become a great spokesman with the scriptures]; and he began [in verse 26] to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. [Let me tell you what happened there is he was baptized in Jesus' name. He'd been baptized in John's name. Now he was baptized in Jesus' name and he understood all of Christ.] And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples [There it is. They wrote a letter. They wrote a letter to the disciples] to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.*

Apollos was in Ephesus and he moved by a letter from the brethren to Corinth. Corinth is the capital of Achaia so he moved from Ephesus to Corinth, from the church at Ephesus to the church at Corinth and they wrote a letter and he moved his letter and Baptists have used that. If you come join our church today from XYZ Church we will write a letter to XYZ and XYZ will write us back and you will move your letter. That's the way that works. You put your membership here in this church. You say, "Preacher, it's not important." Oh yes it is. It's important that you letter in and letter out from where you were.

Now you find people, they say, "You know, I was saved and married up in the country and I'm going to be buried up there in the country. So I've moved to town but I'm going to leave my membership up there." Why? Your kids are going to come here. Why? Why would you do that? "Well it's sentiment. I'm just a sentimental person. I go back up there to dinner on the grounds once a year." Yeah, but you're working here 45-50 weeks a year.

Why should you move your letter? Let me give you four reasons you ought to do it today. Number one, you ought to join Olive for your own sake. You get the word here, the water of the word comes to you. You fellowship here. You have growth here. You ought to unite with the church because, you see, for your own sake it keeps you accountable to a local church.

Yesterday I was burning some trash. I keep a pile going out there in my burning pit for when these storms come through and limbs fall out so I decided to burn yesterday and I did. I set it on fire and went about doing some other stuff. When I came back out, there was a big limb about like my arm that had rolled out of the fire pit over here on the grass and burnt the grass a little bit. The rest of the fire was just a going and I went over there. I looked at it. I just reached down and picked it up. It

didn't bother me. It was cold. Why had it gotten cold? It had gotten away from the fire. I said, "Lord, I've used this illustration before but I've just never really seen it like that."

You see, what happens is if you don't link your life with a family you'll just get isolated and there'll be times you'll get cold over here. You ought to join a church for your own sake because you need it. It'll keep you accountable. It'll help you grow. There'll be fellowship. We've got this isolationist mentality. I have people tell me, "You know, preacher, I can worship just as well on the river bank fishing or up in the deer stand." That's a lie from hell. The Bible says where two or three are together, there He is in their midst. Deer and fish don't get saved. As a matter of fact, if those fish were full of the Holy Ghost they'd be jumping in your boat. You wouldn't have to catch them. Now all of us need those times we get away. I do that. Let me tell you, what you need is the fellowship of a local church. You ought to join this church for your own sake.

Number two. You ought to join it for the church's sake. For the church's sake? Yes, sir. We need you. Olive needs you. We need you to encourage us. We need you to serve alongside of us. We need you to help support the mission that we do. This church needs you. I have people, they'll say to me from time to time, "Well, you know, pastor, that's a large church and they really don't need me." Oh yes we do. The larger our responsibility, the more people we need to carry out the responsibility. So we need you. We need you. We need you to be a part for your own sake, yes, but for the church's sake to come and say, "I'm going to be a part and I'm going to do my part," as I encourage others and support and serve.

Number three, not only for your own sake and for the church's sake, you ought to do it for your family's sake. For your family's sake? Yes. You see, some of you have got those little kids down there in the preschool but your membership's still off somewhere in a country church or another church, another town, and these kids are going to come down this aisle and they're going to get saved and they're going to be baptized and they're going to join this church. They're going to say, "Momma and Daddy, are you a member at Olive?" and you're going to say, "No, we're still up at Mount Hebron." "Why don't you join here?" "Well, you know." You're going to teach your kids that it's not important to be involved where they are. You ought to do it for your family's sake, get all together. Because you see, the way you do it is you move from one to the next to the next to the next.

Jon Tyner's brother, Justin, today's his birthday. I saw it on Facebook this morning. His momma, Joy, had pictures talking about her little baby boy and they used to bring him to church here when he was a baby boy. He got saved here and grew up. I posted on there, "You never know when you're raising a deacon. You never know when you're raising the next minister of music at Olive Baptist Church." So Joy raised that boy and now he's a deacon here. Now he's got kids of his own and those kids will come and they'll link and it'll be generation after generation. They stay here but you may move and wherever you go, you need to put your life in that church and you do it for your family's sake. It teaches when you're a part of the family of God. I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. I've been washed....

We don't even need Jon Tyner, I'm telling you. It's the family. It's the family of God. It's who we are. Amen? We come together. That was the first time we ever rehearsed that right here at the 11:00 service. You ought to join for your own sake, for the church's sake, for your family's sake. Do you know when you go to California and you fly to California, you'll fly across the Rocky Mountains and anytime you fly, you'll look down if it's a clear day and you'll see those mountains have got white on them. You think that's snow but it's not. That's all the Southern Baptists that have flown to California and over the Rocky Mountains, they've thrown out their church letter and that's all scattered across those mountains. They've gone to California never to be a part of the church again.

Friend, you ought to take your membership with you and put it where it needs to be and be a part of a church. I'm not talking about perfection. As long as I'm the pastor and J.T.'s the deacon chairman and Jon's the minister of music, it's not going to be a perfect church. Amen? No. We're not talking perfection. We're talking obedience to the Lamb of God. You ought to do it for your own sake, for the church's sake. You ought to do it for the family's sake. You ought to join this church for Jesus' sake. Jesus loves the church.

Do you know when you read this book he talks about He's going to build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it but when people begin to write letters they write it to the church at Corinth, the church at Ephesus, the church at Colossae, the church at Philippi, to the church at Laodicea. It's the local church. If we were in his day, he'd write a letter to the church at Olive. Jesus loves His church, loves His local church. You ought to love the church universal but you ought to love the church local. You ought to honor the Lord Jesus. Just for Jesus' sake, you ought to be a part of the church, to make His name known, to honor Him, and invite your friends to your church.

I went to the zoo on Thursday, Liz and myself and Rachel and the two grandgirls. We were not thirty paces inside the zoo and one of the ladies that feeds the monkeys looked right at me and she said, "You are a famous person on television." I said, "No, ma'am, I'm just here to feed the monkeys." She said, "I watch you on that television. I can't always come because I have to work a lot on Sundays but I watch you on that TV." Do you, know, friend, she may watch me but she's listening to you because this is our ministry. This is Olive that goes forth across this gulf coast. I can't do that by myself. You need for the community's sake, for the ministry's sake, you ought to be a part of a local church.

Now this morning I handed you a card when you came in here. You've got one and at the bottom of that is a tear-off. If you're here today and you want to join Olive Baptist Church I want you to fill that out. On the front of the card now I need your name and your address. Tell me Mr. or Mrs., Reverend, Doctor, married, single, phone, address, email, birthdate. Fill that out. Then on the flip side of that card I need you to tell me about your decision. "I want to become a Christian." You say, "I prayed with you

today, pastor.” Check that circle. Let me know that you did that. You say, “I’ve been saved but I’ve never been baptized and I’m ready to do it.” Check that baptismal circle. Then you say, “I want to move my membership. I want to move my letter.” Right there. “I want to join Olive. I’m transferring my membership from XYZ.” Whatever the name of that church is. Twenty-five years ago I filled out a card like this. I said, “I’m coming from Orchard Hills Baptist Church in Garland, Texas.” We’ll write them a letter and they’ll write back.

Now some of you are coming from a Presbyterian church. They normally don’t grant a membership and so you’ll come by statement of faith. You just write down, “I’m a member of XYZ Presbyterian.” That’s fine. We’ll understand that. We’ll receive you by statement of your faith. You’ve stated you’ve trusted Christ, been baptized by immersion, and we receive you into our family. “I’ve been baptized.” Tell us where that was. So you fill out both sides of that card. When you finish with it just tear it off right like that and when we put our offering in the offering plate you just drop that card in the offering plate. Tell me what you want to do.

Then I’m going to write you a letter myself this week. I’m going to write it, sign it. Everybody fills that out and I’m going to follow up with you about your commitment saying, “Welcome,” or “ready to be baptized,” or tell us a little more or something that we may need to get. We’ll follow up with you. We may give you a phone call if there’s something we’ve got to have immediately but I’ll write every one of you a letter and give that back to you. If you’re ready to make that commitment, today’s church day. It’s membership day at Olive. It’s a good day.

I’m amazed at the number of people who come here and have just never crossed that line to say, “It’s my church, pastor, my church.” If you want to do that today then be about filling that card out. We’re giving you a moment to do it. In a few minutes, this wonderful group’s going to come sing. They’re making their way over here to do it and when they sing this great song we’re going to take our offering. When we take our offering we’re going to let that offering plate be the receptacle also for your commitment card. You’ll just drop that card right in there. If you’re a guest and you filled out a guest registration card, you’ll put that in there. What a great day it is to join Olive Baptist Church. Amen.

I got a letter from a lady this week. She’s a Methodist. She said, “Pastor, you’ve been talking about it. I’m ready to do it.” Maybe she’s in this service. I don’t know. She’ll fill out one of these cards. She said, “I’m going to join.” If I don’t find her card, I’ll call her this week, write her, call her, something. Just place that right there.

Some of you struggle because there’s some real ties back at that church where you came from. Some of you may have some family in that church that you think – let me tell you, if your family are really churchmen they’re going to really rejoice with you about finding a church to call home. Amen. I know some of you it’s a tie, it’s a pull to come as you move. I remember when my kids went off to college and they were gone. They said, “You know, I’ve never been in a church where my daddy wasn’t the pastor.”

They probably grew more than any other time in their life. They get shed of me, you know. I don't know what you need to do but the call of God is in your heart. You know what you need to be about so you fill out that card, both sides of it. Let us know and just drop that in the offering plate today. If you've believed on Christ, hallelujah. I sure want to hear from you. If you're ready to be baptized, we're ready to make that happen on this good day.

Well I'm going to pray and after I pray our ushers will be ready and they'll come. Now don't get up and go because you don't want to miss this song. Buddy, this is good stuff that this wonderful group's going to do and we'll take our offering and then we'll conclude our time together.

Father, I give you praise. I dedicate every one of these people to you today. For those that have been members the very longest, I pray your favor on them. For those that are taking a step of obedience today to believe, to be baptized, to move their letter, their membership, give them grace to do that that's in their heart of what they want to do. Lord, help them do it because they want to honor the name that's above every name. We simply dedicate now these people, these commitments, these tithes and these offerings unto you and we do it by faith in Jesus' name. Amen.