

**Healthy Church Membership: Part 2**  
**The Marks of a Committed Member**  
**Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025**  
**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture**

**John 13:34-35**

***[34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."***

**Pray**

**Introduction**

Listen to this excerpt from Thomas Rainer's book, "I am a Church Member."

*It was a big deal for this young boy living in the small Southern town. I didn't know what a country club was, but I knew one was coming to town. And it included a swimming pool, a dining area, and meeting rooms. The owners also promised to build a small golf course, a promise they would fulfill a couple of years later.*

*Now don't get the wrong impression. This country club was not the typical upscale clubs we often envision. It was really a small private enterprise trying to make a few bucks in a small town by offering a few amenities.*

*But I was overwhelmed. My parents were middle-class in income, so they could afford the small monthly fee. From my perspective, though, I had it made. I could now go to a swimming pool. I didn't know of anyone who had their own pool in town, so this amenity was exciting. I could order a burger from the dining area. And we could have birthday parties in the pool or the meeting rooms.*

*I began to learn a lesson. Membership means perks. Membership means privileges. Membership means others will serve me. Just pay the going rate, and you can have others taking care of you while you enjoy a life of leisure.*

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If you were here last week for part 1 of this series, you will remember that I tried to lay the groundwork for the biblical basis for membership.

I laid out how many New Testament passages point to the idea of membership and that many of the New Testament teachings like the "one another" commands actually lose their meaning apart from a committed membership within the local church.

But I also wanted us to see that membership wasn't just something that was biblical, but that it is also beneficial. It includes us to the Great Commission, it clarifies the one another commands, it helps us to grow spiritually, and it leads to joy.

And yet, as important as those things are, I don't think that those particular things or what many of us struggle with.

We live in a country where membership is a normal part of life. In fact, many of us probably have memberships that we pay for like Sams Club, a local gym, national parks, a union, AAA, Spotify, or gaming websites.

**So the idea of membership isn't necessarily the issue.** The issue is that each of these kinds of memberships has trained us to believe that membership is about what we get and not about what we are supposed to give. As Rainer wrote in the opening story:

*I began to learn a lesson. Membership means perks. Membership means privileges. Membership means others will serve me. Just pay the going rate, and you can have others taking care of you while you enjoy a life of leisure.*

But this is the antithesis or opposite of what Jesus wants for us as members of his body.

So this morning, we are going to push back against these cultural ideas of membership as we look at what the Bible teaches us about being a committed member of the local church.

To do this, we are going to look at five marks or traits of being a committed church member.

The first one is going to be the overarching or defining mark of membership, and then the next 4 are practical things that God is calling us to live out within the local body of believers.

**Just a word of warning before we begin.**

It will be really easy for some of you to listen to this sermon and see it as nothing more than a list of things that you need to do, improve upon, or add to your life so you can be a better Christian.

But if you can remember all the way back to November, we discussed these words from Jesus in Matthew 11:30 when he said:

***[30] For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."***

Following Jesus and his commands are not meant to be burdensome. Rather they are meant to be easy or gladdening to the soul.

So don't see this sermon as a mere list of duties to improve upon. But rather see it as an opportunity to experience more of the goodness, gladness, and joy that Christ provides.

With that said, let's start by looking at the defining mark of membership.

## **The Defining Mark of Membership: Committed Love**

### **John 13:34-35**

***[34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.***

John 13 opens with this beautiful picture of servanthood as Jesus bows down to wash the feet of his disciples and he tells them that this is an example for them to follow. Then, in verses 34-35 he sums up what he just did for them by giving them a new commandment.

They are to love one another in the same way that he has just loved them. This is a deep, servant-hearted and committed love that they are to have for one another, because that is the same love that Christ has for them.

And this new and **overarching command** isn't just for the disciples in Jesus day, but it is meant to be true for everyone who calls themselves a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you might be thinking, "is loving one another, with the love of Christ, an over-arching command that is above all the other ones? **Yes, it is.**

This is why Jesus tells us in Matthew 22 that the greatest commandments are **"to Love God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves."** They are overarching commands. Or as Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:8:

***[8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.***

A Christ-filled love for one another is meant to be at the forefront of everything that we do.

And the best place for this committed love to express itself is through God's people within the confines of the local church.

In fact, every other mark of committed membership is dependent on whether or not we have a heart that is full of the love of Christ and by extension the love of others.

Because remember, Christ loved us by becoming a servant and sacrificially pouring out his life for us. And only when we truly see the magnificence of his love, will we be able to pour out that same kind of love for others.

## Application

Now, I don't know about you, but this hits me square in the heart. Because I look back on all the times that I have been cold toward my wife, kids, or others, or the times when I have served others, but it was out of a sense of duty and grumbling.

The reality of those moments is that I stopped beholding and standing in awe of the love of Christ poured out for me. I lost sight of the ultimate act of servanthood and love done for a wretched man like me so that I could be a child of the living God.

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And if you find yourself in the same place or see similar things in your own heart then I want to encourage you to first confess it to God. But second, come back and remind yourself again and gain of the price that Christ paid for you.

**So that we would all behold him and love him, and be able to love others with the same committed and servant-hearted love that he has for us.**

Because, when this kind of love becomes the defining mark of God's people, especially within the local church, Jesus says that ***“all people will know that you are my disciples.”***

**The world will know that we belong to Christ because we look like Christ. The fullness of Christ and his love will be on display through the church and he will be made to look great.**

Therefore, the committed and servant-hearted love of Christ is the first and most important mark of membership.

So now, let's turn to the other important marks of membership that flow from it.

### The Marks of a Committed Member

#### 1. A committed member attends regularly

##### Hebrews 10:24–25

***[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.***

Now, regular church attendance probably seems like a low bar to start with right? But I am amazed by the fact that there are many believers out there who don't see regular church attendance as necessary.

In fact, a gallop survey from 2022 confirms this by showing that only about 20% of people who are church members actually attend on a regular basis.

Think about that. That would mean if our weekly average attendance is around 120 then only 20 people here attend regularly.

Of course, I firmly believe we are doing a lot better than 20% as a church, but it does show us that we can't take the idea of regular church attendance for granted.

Even in the first century, regular church attendance was apparently an issue because the writer of Hebrews had to tell people, **“hey don't neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some.”**

Certain believers were willfully choosing to not participate in the church body. Therefore, the author of Hebrews is pointing out their error so that others would learn from their wrongdoing.

This means that the author believes that regular church attendance is necessary and important.

But why? Why is it important to be present within this church community on a regular basis? There are many reasons to gather, but I will briefly give you three.

### **First, it's commanded by God.**

If the book of Hebrews is the word of God, and I believe it is, then Hebrews 10:24-25 are God's words. Therefore, his call and command to us is to not neglect meeting together. **This means that we need to gather as a church on a regular basis.**

### **Secondly, worshipping Jesus together is powerful.**

#### **Matthew 18:19–20**

***[19] Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. [20] For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”***

Right within a section where Jesus is talking about how the church should do discipline, he is telling his disciples that when the church gathers, agrees, and prays for the same things, even if the church is only a few people, it will be done for them by the Father.

Because when they gather as a church, Jesus and his Spirit are present.

This means that right now, in this place, Jesus is in our midst, and he is ready to do powerful eternity-altering things in this gathering. That is amazing and should compel us to want to gather as a church.

### **Third, regularly gathering together is a gospel witness.**

Look with me at Ephesians 1:22-23 which we touched on last week.

***[22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him (Christ) who fills all in all.***

When we make a commitment to regularly gather together, sit under the preaching of the word, pray together, sing gospel truths together, work together, and fellowship with one another we are living out and displaying the love of Christ to one another and to the world around us.

Which means that we are being a picture of Christ. His gospel, his goodness, and his character are on display when we come to this place.

**So it is good and right for us to prioritize this meeting so that Jesus can be seen in us.**

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But as good and right as regular attendance is, there is so much more that God wants for us as members of this body.

## **2. A committed member builds others up**

### **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

***[11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.***

Or going back to Hebrews 10:24:

***[24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works...***

These verses strike right at the heart of our culture's understanding of membership, don't they? Instead of membership being about perks, privileges, and what we get **(though there are perks and privileges to being a member of the body of Christ, the church)** it is about loving and serving others.

Our default setting within the body of Christ should not be "How can others serve me or build me up?" Rather, it should be "How can I encourage others? How can I build others up in their faith? And how can I help others grow in their love for Christ and desire to live out their faith?"

For some of us, this might feel a little intimidating. Because we are unsure if we have any ability to help others grow in this way.

Maybe you're a young single person who doesn't feel old enough or mature enough to build others up in their faith. Or maybe you are someone who has made so many mistakes that you feel like you have nothing of value to add to another believer's life.

Or maybe you are a senior saint who is full of wisdom that will help others to grow, but you don't feel like they will be open to what you have to say.

But remember what Paul says about your place in the body. He writes in 1 Corinthians 12:27:

***[27] Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.***

And then he says in the second half of Ephesians 4:16:

***[16b] ...when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

Each one of us are members of the body of Christ, which means that we all are called and have the ability, by the Spirit of God, to build others up in their faith.

Application

And to give you some simple ideas of what this can look like in the church I am going to give you a couple of commands from scripture and one example from my own life.

Let's look at Ephesians 4:29

***[29] Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.***

Paul is writing these words to the Ephesian church because he realizes that people so easily speak words that hurt, criticize, and tear down others. I mean, just get on any social media website and foul hate-filled speech will be right in front of your face.

But instead of spewing words of hate, we, as believers, should come into the church community with a desire to use words that build others up. Words that continually express love, encouragement, appreciation, and affirmation.

*"I love you." "I appreciate you." "God has used you to minister to me." "Thank you for your selfless ministry." "I want you to know that I am praising God because I have seen him working in your life."*

This is something that actually doesn't take a lot of knowledge or even energy, it just takes a change of perspective. **To come here with a desire to encourage and give, rather than to get.**

Then a few verses later in Ephesians 4:32 Paul also writes:

***[32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

Again, if you spend any time on the internet, you realize that we live in a world that is so easily offended, and where people can hold onto grudges for a long time.

But the genuine love of God, lived out within the body of Christ is not easily offended and it doesn't hold grudges.

Instead, we remember the blood of Christ applied to us and the forgiveness that we have received from him, so that we are able to day by day, hold out forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

In this way, we have the ability to lovingly and freely extend the mercy and kindness of God to others so that they would love him and follow him more.

Finally, I want to give you an example from my life.

When I first got into ministry in 2011, I was a worship pastor at a Baptist church in Ohio. While I was there, I developed a friendship with a young man by the name of Dustin who was the part-time youth guy.

Now, Dustin never pretended to be a deep theologian or someone who had all of the biblical knowledge or wisdom, but what he did have was genuine love for people.

He was so good at loving and serving people right where they were at, and he was really good at encouraging others in the work that he saw God doing in their lives.

This has left a genuine impression on my life, and even though he was almost 10 years younger than I was at the time, the way that he loved and encouraged others is something that I have tried to emulate in my life.

**God used him to build me up in my faith and to help me grow as a minister of the gospel.**

I hope you realize that you have the Spirit of God living within you and that he wants to use you in similar ways, right where you are at.

**But it requires us to come here with a desire to serve and build up rather than be served.**

### **3. A committed member supports the work of the ministry**

**Ephesians 4:11–12**

***[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...***

Now, in some ways, this point is closely tied to the previous one, but instead of just thinking about how we should build others up individually, it reminds us that we have a responsibility to the whole church.



Each person who is a believer in this room, and who commits themselves to this body is called by God to work within it so that this church would look more like Christ.

**This means that a committed member of the local church should be giving of their resources, time, and talents so that believers will grow, and the gospel will produce fruit inside and outside of these walls.**

Will we all do that in the same way, no. But Paul reminds us that no matter what our gifts are we are supposed to use them within the local church. As he writes in Romans 12:4-8:

***[4] For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, [5] so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. [6] Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; [7] if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; [8] the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.***

Application

There is a lot I could say about this, but I mainly want to address two types of people that may be in this room.

The first group are those who don't think they have anything to give. If this is you, please, please hear these words from 1 Corinthians 12:7:

***[7] To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.***

You have the Spirit of God within you, and therefore, God has given you gifts that are useful and are for the good of the body.

The second group, however, is those who know they have gifts, talents, and resources. You use them every day in your home or job and yet you don't use them in the church.

For you, I want to challenge you with 1 Corinthians 14:12 which says:

***[12] So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.***

It is good for you to use your gifts, resources, and skills outside of this community. Please continue to do that. However, God wants you to see that one of the primary reasons he has given you those things is so that you would use them to build up the church.

**So if you are not using your gifts here or if you are unsure what your gifts are talk to us as elders.**

**We want to help you identify them and use them for the building up the church so you too can be a part of displaying the greatness and love of Christ in this place.**

#### **4. A committed member bears the burdens of others.**

##### **Galatians 6:2**

***[2] Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.***

Again, we touched on this verse last week, but I think it is worth highlighting again. Because it highlights a difference that should exist between the church and the rest of humanity.

In general, we live in a world where most people are willing to help someone in need, especially if it doesn't cost them that much.

However, the biblical call to bear one another's burdens goes way beyond simply helping someone in need. **It literally means to take on the burden as if it was our own.**

This means that within this local body, we, as its members, are called to invest in people's lives and difficult situations as if they were our own.

Now I get that it is tempting to want to make a lot of excuses for why this shouldn't apply to us. We're too busy, we have our own struggles, or that isn't what I'm good at.

But when we say this, we miss out on the goodness and the joy that God has for us when we freely give of ourselves, even when it's hard.

Look with me at 2 Corinthians 8:1-5:

***[1] We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia (this includes the Philippians), [2] for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. [3] For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, [4] begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—[5] and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.***

**When we take on the burdens of others, especially within the church, it may cost us something, but what we also have waiting for us is an abundance of joy.**

##### **Application**

In fact, one of the ways that you can begin to do that today is by helping out the Wilkins. Hopefully you saw the meal train email that went out. Brandon is home from the hospital and is recovering, but his recovery is going to take a while.

And one of the ways we can joyfully bless their family is by preparing meals for them. So I encourage you, go, sign-up, and take part in God's call to love his church by bearing their burden.

## **Conclusion**

So this is what it looks like to be a committed member of the local church, the body of Christ.

We must attend regularly, seek to build others up in their faith, use our time, talent, and resources within the body, and we must bear one another's burdens.

And my encouragement to each one of us is to take these seriously and to ask God how he wants us either to begin or to continue to live these out within LEFC.

But before you do that, I want you to remember three things:

1. Living out these commitments within the body is only possible if we are filled with the committed love of Christ.
2. That being a committed member is not meant to be burdensome. Rather it is an opportunity to experience more of the goodness, gladness, and joy that Christ provides. **(His easy yoke)**
3. Remember, you are working for the Lord, and what he has in store for you, as his servant is an eternal inheritance.

## **Colossians 3:23-24**

***[23] Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, [24] knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.***

**Let's Pray**