

**FROM THE PASTOR TO YOU!**

**(ARTICLE 6)**

**THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

**“I’m now a member of the church.”**

**Millions of persons utter these words with a joy in their hearts that is inexpressible. They have found Christ the Savior, their sins are forgiven, and there is peace in their souls. As Christians they have obeyed the Lord’s command to follow Him in baptism and unite with His church; they have found great happiness in this new relationship.**

**Many, however, who speak those words, fail to comprehend their significance. Sometimes they live for many years without ever seeming to learn the real meaning of membership. This should not be true. Every member should know the seriousness and sacredness of his commitment. It is surprising that so many hold membership without realizing their privileges and opportunities or accepting their obligations. Surely this is not because of a determination to be indifferent. They have not been brought face to face with the real meaning of church membership, nor have they had its various aspects laid on their hearts.**

**Just what is this organization to which you belong? It is a New Testament church. Dr. George W. McDaniel defined a local church as “an organized body of baptized believers equal in rank and privileges, administering its affairs under the headship of Christ, united in the belief of what He has taught, covenanting together to do what He has commanded, and cooperating with other like bodies in Kingdom movements.”**

**The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest institution that the world has ever known. Christ established it during His personal ministry, and He is its head (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). He promised that He would be with it through the ages and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18; 28:20) To it He gave the Great Commission and the ordinances, and for it He went to the cross. (Matt. 28:19-20; ICor. 11:23-26; Eph. 5:25) He loved the church, and He wants His churches to honor and glorify Him as His representatives on the earth. (Eph. 3:21; 5:25-27)**

**The Lord's churches have the greatest task ever assigned to any individual or group in the world's history—carrying the glorious gospel of Christ the Savior to every nation and tongue. No other commission like that has ever been given or will ever be given. In carrying out this work, the church has done more for the world than any governments ever organized, all the other institutions ever established, or all the armies ever assembled. World history has been changed by the work of Christ through His churches.**

**We see then that we have a great privilege in being members of Baptist churches. They are churches with a glorious beginning, a blood-written history, an illustrious present and a future as bright as the promises of God. They are churches that have held true to God's Word through persecution and tribulation and whose members have been numbered among the faithful. They are churches that today have a membership of more than twenty-five million, and are growing rapidly as they carry the true gospel message to a lost world. Truly it is a privilege to be a member of a Baptist church.**

**Membership also brings us great opportunities. These include opportunity for fellowship in the finest company that can be found and opportunity for Christian growth, development, and training through the various departments of the church organization. We have opportunity for Christian service through the church in the name of Christ to those at home and around the globe. Where else can we find such opportunities to live for God and our fellow men?**

**Membership places upon us an inescapable obligation—an obligation to make the church and its' work first in our lives. It is an obligation to use our time and our talents for the glory of God, an obligation to support the work with our presence, our influence, and our means. Churches are never stronger than their membership; and a membership of worldly, careless, negligent, stunted Christians will prevent a church from accomplishing much for the Lord. There is need for every member to be consecrated, trained, and enlisted in active service. We are under obligation to be the very best members possible under the leading of the Lord.**

**We see then that membership is a privilege and an opportunity that entails great obligations. Too many members have not learned these things. Their churches mean little to them, and they mean little to their churches. Dr. E. P. Alldredge, who for many years served as secretary of the Department of Survey, Statistics and Information of the Baptist Sunday School Board, once said that 60 percent of the members of the average church were unenlisted. That condition must be changed. Won't you help change it by making your membership really count for Christ?**

**Reference: Joe T. Odle, Church Member's Handbook;  
Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee**