LESSON THREE: Belonging

"Why Should I Join a Church?"

I. SOME WORDS USED IN THE BIBLE TO DESCRIBE THE CHURCH:

Ephesians 2:19. C _ _ _ _ _ _ _ with God's people and m _ _ _ _ _ _ of God's household.

Ephesians 3:15. His whole f _ _ _ _ _ in heaven and on earth.

1 Peter 2:9. You are a chosen p _ _ _ _ _, a royal p _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _, a holy n _ _ _ _ _, a p _ _ _ _ _ belonging to God.

1 Corinthians 12:27. Your are the b _ _ _ of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

What comes to mind when you think of being a family, a household, a nation, part of a body?

II. SOME EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE:

What did Jesus do on the Sabbath Day?	Luke 4:16
What did Paul seek to do after he believed on Christ?	Acts 9:26
What did the three thousand new believers do?	Acts 2:41
Did people know who belonged to the church?	Acts 5:12-14

The phrase "one another" or "each other" is used over fifty times in the New Testament. We are to love each other, pray for each other, encourage each other, teach each other, accept each other, honor each other, forgive each other, sing to each other, be devoted to each other, etc.

III. SOME BIBLICAL AND PRACTICAL REASONS FOR JOINING A CHURCH:

Identifies a person as a true believer. Ephesians 2:19
Provides me with a spiritual family to help and encourage me. Hebrews 10:24-25
Gives me a place to discover and use my gifts in ministry. 1 Peter 4:10
Gives me spiritual nourishment and protection. Acts 20:28-29
Gives me the accountability I need to grow. Ephesians 5:21

IV. A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH:

No player without a team
No musician without an orchestra
No sheep without a shepherd
No child without a family

Not only do we <u>believe</u> on Christ, but we also <u>belong</u> to Christ and to His family.

Christ willingly identified with us by bearing our sin in His own body.
We should be willing to identify with Him by uniting
with a local group of His people.

"…We need to honor Christ by being His bride in every sense—outwardly as well as inwardly, visibly as well as invisibly, and officially in the local church as well as spiritually in the universal body."

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The church is the primary means through which God carries out His purpose in this world. To call the lost to Christ and to build up His people.
("Attempting to grow in Christ outside of the church is like trying to learn to swim without ever getting into the pool!)

Every Christian should commit himself to membership because:

1) The command for commitment.

Heb. 10:24-25. The "one anothers."
Example of a brick: useless by itself.
The NT does not even contain a hint of someone who was saved but not a part of a local church.

2) The obligation of obedience to the leaders of a local church.

Hebrews 13:17
Membership: clarifies the difference between believers and unbelievers;
causes the visible church to better reflect the invisible church;
is essential to an orderly administration of the church;
promotes involvement from those on the 'fringes' of the church;
provides an opportunity to educate people about the nature and distinctives of the church.

3) The privileges of partnership.

"Church membership is not only a commitment on the member's part to the church, but it is a commitment on the church's part to the member."
It provides: ministry opportunities
helpful services
loving accountability (By not joining, we take ourselves away from some of the means that God uses to keep us from sin.)

Thus, membership is not an option for a believer. Cp. to marriage, as opposed to living together. It is a very selfish thing to not join, very often saying that we want no accountability or responsibility to others.

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----Notes from Life in the Father's House.