

JESUS LOVES THE CHURCH

Chapters 15, 16, & 17

REQUIREMENTS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- **Regeneration / Conversion**
- **Personal confession of faith**
- **Godly life**
 - "All persons throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any error everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, are and may be called visible saints; and of such ought all particular congregations to be constituted."

REQUIREMENTS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- **Baptism**

- Does "water" before one is converted count as baptism?
- Notice the interplay of regeneration and church membership on the spectrum of Christianity
 - The farther to the right, baptism becomes essential - but not regeneration (due to emphasis on infant baptism)
 - The further to the left, regeneration becomes essential - but baptism and church membership are "unnecessary".

- **Commitment to the church**

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **How does one join the church?**
 - Conversion & baptism (no baptism without joining)
 - Letter of recommendation from sister church (a real letter, not just a form)
 - Special circumstances: saved, baptized - not a member of another church
 - Received back after excommunication

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **How does one leave a church?**
 - By joining a church to which a letter of recommendation can be sent
 - By excommunication (removal of what the church gave - formal recognition of membership based on credible profession)
 - By death
 - By voluntary withdrawal (though ERBC reserves the right to record as "under discipline" if situation warrants.)

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **When does one leave a church?**

- The church changes its beliefs/ practices from what it originally stated
- The church departs from the truth
- The church is not preaching the gospel (difference: the church may believe the gospel, but isn't actually proclaiming it any longer)
- The tolerates scandalous sin in membership or leadership
- The member changes their beliefs significantly
- Providence - moving away; church closes; church moves

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **When does one NOT leave a church? (insufficient reasons)**
 - Difficult or new teaching of the Bible. If you hear something new, take the time to check it out in the Bible. If not clearly unBiblical, don't leave.
 - Disagreement over minor doctrinal issues
 - The church does something you don't like
 - Your refusal to handle your own sins

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **When does one NOT leave a church? (insufficient reasons)**
 - Personal problems with members or pastors:
 - "No church members, upon any offence taken by them, having performed their duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any church-order, or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church, or administration of any ordinances, upon the account of such offence at any of their fellow members, but to wait upon Christ, in the further proceedings of the church."

MEMBERSHIP: ENTRANCE & EXIT

- **What does one do BEFORE & AFTER leaving a church?**
 - Make sure any issues are properly and lovingly resolved
 - Make sure you have discussed all pertinent issues with your pastors
 - Make sure there is no dissension
 - Leave in a way that you can be commended to another church
 - Leave in a way that you can re-join that church later
 - Any differences remain private