

Love for the Church!

Ephesians 25-30

Happy Birthday Log Church, you don't look a day over 25! The facilities team is doing a great job at keeping you looking so good!

This summer we have been enjoying a summer of love despite the cooler than normal temperatures. We have seen how we should love our neighbors, our enemies, one another, our wives, our ministry partners and today we get to see Jesus' love for us, His bride.

Ephesians 5:25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."

Ephesians 5:29-30, "After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just

as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body."

To understand the level to which Jesus loves the church take a look at:

Revelation 19:7-9, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people.)

9 Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

The church is Jesus' bride!!!

Now, the bride is the universal body of believers, which simply means it is made up of everyone who believes. We also see smaller units of the church in Scripture.

For example, every church that Paul wrote to he would refer to as the church in such and such a city. The church in Ephesus, The church in Corinth, etc.

Paul would also go to a smaller unit. For example, in his letter to the church in Ephesus he also addressed the church which meets in the home of Priscilla and Aquila. They, of course, were leaders in the church in Ephesus so these home churches made up the greater church, the one in Ephesus, which in turn makes up the universal church of all believers.

Back to our main point, Jesus loves His bride. And we see in Ephesians that Jesus makes His church perfect.

With that in mind, how do you think Jesus feels about attacks on the church from the world? How about attacks on the church from believers?

When we attack the church, we attack His bride. This is why unity in the church is so important to Jesus.

So, how do we then act towards the church? How do we act as the church? Here are 5 things that we are called to:

1. We are called to pursue holy living.

From our passage in Ephesians, we already know that Jesus is making the church pure.

1 John 3:6-7, “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.”

Sin is a serious matter. We know that we are forgiven by the grace of God but that doesn't mean we should not take sin seriously. When Paul asks the rhetorical question, “What then, should we sin, that grace may abound?” He answers it with the strongest “no” in the Greek language. He says “no way!”

So for membership in The Log Church we make this pledge:

Pledge #1 – “I am committing myself to being a member who is actively pursuing holy, “Christ-like” living which also includes turning from sin and sinful ways. As Paul writes in Ephesians (4:32-5:1) I will seek to be kind to one another, tenderhearted forgiving others as Christ forgives me and seeking to be imitators of Christ, walking in love as Christ Loves us.”

This doesn't mean we are perfect, it means we are working on doing better. This means that if I have the sin of pride, I will work on becoming humble. If I struggle with anger, I will work on becoming gentle. If I struggle with lust, I will work on becoming pure of mind. We are all a work in progress.

2. We are called to be unified.

Colossians 3:12-14, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Pledge #2 – I will seek to be a source of unity as a member of The Log Church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of gossip or dissension. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the gospel.

Why is unity important? How appealing do you think the church is to the world when it is in dissension?

When we reflect the unity of the Trinity we are appealing not only to the world but also to one another. In order to reflect Jesus, we must be unified.

3. We are called to Not Let Church Be About My Preferences and Desires.

The word servant appears 57 times in the New Testament and the word serve 58 times. Jesus was clear that the first would be last and the last would be first.

The church exists to help us change into the image of Jesus, not for us to change others into our image.

Pledge #3 – I will not let my church be about my preferences and desires. That is self-serving. I am a member of this church to serve others and to serve Christ. My Savior went to a cross for me. I can deal with any inconveniences and matters that just aren't my preference or style.

Every song will not be to your preference. We won't offer every possible study or ministry that you might like. The length of the service will either be too long

or too short, but never the perfect length. But it isn't about us, it's about Jesus.

And that part about not perfect pastor...don't believe it. Opps, there went perfection.

No, but honestly, I struggle every day just like you...which leads to our next pledge.

4. We are called to pray for our church leaders.

Pledge #4 – I will pray for my pastors, elders and church leaders. I understand that they must deal with many critics, with attacks from Satan, and with numerous demands that bring emotional highs and lows. I will also pray for their spouses and family as they too face similar demands, attacks and pressure. My church's leaders cannot do all things in their own power so I will pray for the Lord to provide them strength, protection, and wisdom.

Scripture has high expectations for the role of elder, which is the same word for pastor in the New Testament. And so does the congregation.

Now, some of those expectations are based on Scripture and others are personal preferences. Don't hold leaders up to a standard of personal preference.

But hold them to the Scriptural standards and how you can help do that is to pray for all our leaders to reflect the biblical standard.

Again, being honest, we need that support. We need your prayers just as you need ours. That is part of how we serve one another.

5. We are called to be an active church member.

Romans 12:4-5, "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

Every single believer makes up the church, the bride of Christ. What happens when a number of those parts stop working? What happens when 25% of the cells in a body stop working? It dies.

The church typically in America operates with 20-25% of its cells working. Now, that said, the church does amazing work. Imagine what it could do if 50% of its cells were working. 75%...100%. What would happen in the world if the church became fully alive? What would happen? Do you want to find out?

Pledge #5 – I am committing myself to being an active member of The Log Church where I will give of my time and talents and treasure to the Lord through the ministry of The Log Church. I will make worship a priority. I will use my gifts to serve somewhere in the body. I will commit to being or working to become a “tither” where I bring a full tithe to the Lord from what he has blessed me with.