



COVENANT

I WILL LOVE AND HONOR GOD WITH MY WHOLE HEART

SERIES SPOTLIGHT: Church membership is a response to Christ's saving grace and our Church Covenant is the agreement among members to live together in that grace, helping one another follow Jesus.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:28-34; Ephesians 2:8-10, 19-22

SERMON SUMMARY: The First Baptist Church Gulfport Membership Covenant begins with our relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, publicly expressed through baptism, and our commitment to belong and serve within His church. Membership calls us to embrace shared beliefs and purpose and accept personal responsibility toward God, fellow members, and church leadership. The foundation of these commitments is wholehearted love for God. We express that love by praising Him for His grace, seeking and doing His will, and treasuring our personal relationship with Him. As these practices shape our daily lives, they strengthen our church's mission of Amplifying Hope Across the Coast by Connecting People to Life in Jesus.

SERMON SPOTLIGHT: Because Jesus has given 100% of Himself for us, we give ourselves to wholeheartedly love and honor God.

I. BAPTISM AND COVENANT MEMBERSHIP.

When we join a church, we are doing more, so much more, than adding our name to a membership roll. We are identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ and committing ourselves to a congregation of believers.

The Bible is very clear about the privileges and responsibilities of belonging to a church family. It describes how we should live together, worship together and serve together, because we belong to Jesus. These are spelled out in our Membership Covenant.

First Baptist Church Gulfport Membership Covenant

Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and been baptized by full immersion, and being in agreement with First Gulfport's statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the First Baptist Church Gulfport. In doing so, I commit myself to God, to the other members, and to the leadership to do the following . . .

“Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior...” — We belong to Christ first. This is the foundation of our relationship with the church. We have entered into a covenant relationship with God through Jesus.

Church membership begins with a personal relationship with Jesus. Joining a church cannot save us; Jesus saves us by His grace through faith. We unite with His church because we have received Him as Savior and submitted to Him as Lord.

- **EPHESIANS 2:8–10:** Grace saves us and prepares us for a life of good works.
- **ROMANS 10:9–10:** Faith in Christ includes confessing Him as Lord.

**OUR CHURCH COVENANT IS A RESPONSE TO SALVATION.
IT WILL NEVER BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR IT.**

“...and been baptized by full immersion...” — We openly identify with Christ along with every other member of our church. Baptism publicly declares our faith in the crucified and risen Jesus. Immersion pictures burial and resurrection: we belong to Christ and are called to walk in newness of life. Baptism does not earn salvation; it expresses faith and obedience.

- **ROMANS 6:3–4:** Baptism portrays identification with Christ’s death and resurrection.
- **MATTHEW 28:19–20:** Jesus commands baptism and a continuing life of obedience.

Baptism announces whose we are; our *daily lives* should demonstrate whom we follow.

“...being in agreement with First Gulfport’s statements, strategy, and structure...” — We embrace a shared life and purpose. Members should understand and support the church’s beliefs, mission, and way of working together. Covenant agreement does not require identical opinions on every subject. It does call for honest commitment to our shared convictions and willingness to pursue our mission together: Amplifying Hope Across the Coast by Connecting People to Life in Jesus.

- **PHILIPPIANS 1:27:** Believers stand together and work together for the gospel. A church moves forward when its members share more than a meeting place—they share convictions and purpose.”

“...led by the Holy Spirit to unite...” — We belong intentionally.

Membership deserves prayerful, patient consideration. We seek a church family where we can worship, grow, serve, and help others follow Jesus.

- **1 CORINTHIANS 12:18–27:** God places members in the body, where each needs the others. We come asking both, ‘How can I grow and serve here?’ and ‘How can I help others grow to faithfully follow Jesus?’

“I commit myself to God, to the other members, and to the leadership . . .” — We accept responsibility for life together.

The covenant expresses a commitment to faithfulness, care, cooperation, and accountability. Our commitment to leadership includes prayer and support, always under the authority of Christ and His Word.

- **EPHESIANS 4:15–16:** The body grows as its members contribute in love.
- **HEBREWS 13:17:** Church leaders carry responsibility for caring for souls.

What will sustain these commitments when church life becomes difficult? Our first principle gives the answer: love for God.

2. I WILL LOVE AND HONOR GOD WITH MY WHOLE HEART

In Mark 12:30, Jesus calls us to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Together, these words communicate 100% devotion—our desires, thoughts, decisions, energy, and actions.

What does this love look like in everyday life?

A. PRAISING GOD FOR HIS GRACE

Ephesians 1:3–7; Psalm 103:1–5; Hebrews 13:15

Grace means that our relationship with God begins with His undeserved love and kindness. He forgives, receives, and renews us through Jesus Christ. Remembering His grace turns our hearts toward gratitude and worship.

- Praise remembers what God has done.
- Praise gives God the glory for our salvation.
- Praise continues through difficulty because His goodness remains.

Wholehearted love grows when we remember how graciously God has loved us.

Make gratitude part of each day. Name specific evidences of God's grace, and come to gathered worship prepared to praise Him.

B. SEEKING AND DOING GOD'S WILL

Romans 12:1–2; John 14:15; James 1:22

Love for God includes both a willingness to listen and a willingness to obey. We seek His will through Scripture and prayer, then act on what He has made clear.

- Seeking requires a teachable heart.
- Doing requires a surrendered will.
- Obedience brings our choices into agreement with our confession of faith and church covenant.

We do not need to wait for a special impression before obeying clear commands to forgive, tell the truth, serve others, pursue holiness, or share the gospel.

We honor God when His Word shapes our decisions.

Identify one clear step of obedience you have delayed, and take that step this week.

C. TREASURING MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

Philippians 3:8–10; John 15:4–5; Psalm 63:1–8

We treasure a relationship by giving it attention. Loving God means valuing fellowship with Him through His Word, prayer, worship, and daily dependence.

Church engagement can encourage that relationship, but even meaningful church work cannot replace personal fellowship with the Lord.

- Make time to listen to God through Scripture.
- Speak honestly with Him in prayer.
- Depend on Him throughout the day.
- Protect space for fellowship with Him.

The greatest treasure of the Christian life is knowing the Lord Himself.

Establish a daily time to read Scripture and pray, asking, “Lord, what does this passage show me about You, and how should I respond?”

Our church covenant begins with grace and calls us to wholehearted love. Jesus has received us, and now we commit ourselves to Him and to one another.

Imagine the strength of a church whose members continually praise God for His grace, seek and do His will, and treasure their relationship with Him and with one another. That love shapes how we worship, serve, give, forgive, and carry the gospel across the Coast to the nations.

LIFE APPLICATION

1. How should receiving Jesus as Savior and living daily with Him as Lord impact everyday decisions in your life? Where do you need to surrender more fully to His leadership/lordship? Name one thing that needs to change in your life for your love for God to become more wholehearted?
2. How does your life reflect the faith you publicly professed in baptism? What specific action would help you live more consistently with your public profession of faith in Jesus?
3. How are you personally participating in our church's mission of connecting people to life in Jesus? What step could you take this week?
4. What does your commitment to fellow church members and church leadership look like in practice? How could you strengthen your commitment to the church through prayer, encouragement, service, or even reconciliation?
5. What specific expressions of God's grace have you experienced recently? How could remembering them deepen your praise and participation in congregational worship? Private worship?
6. Is there something God has clearly instructed you to do in Scripture (or otherwise) that you have delayed doing? What would obedience to that Scripture/instruction look like in your life this coming week?
7. Does the way you spend your time reveal that you treasure your relationship with God? What change would help you give greater attention to Scripture, prayer, and daily fellowship with Him thus fulfilling your commitment to Love and Honor God with your whole heart?