

Becoming a Part of Our Church

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*” Churches that seek to please God and follow His Word can expect and enjoy His blessing. One way God regularly blesses FBC is with new people. Therefore, we choose to view each person God brings to us as one of God’s potential blessings! God also blesses us with a Bible that is sufficient. In His Word He “*has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3). It is our task and our privilege to study what God’s Word says about church membership and then faithfully follow those principles as we add new “blessings” to our church family. As a result, please consider the following principles:

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Why should anyone consider the church, and membership in a church, to be important?

A. It is important because it was important to Jesus Christ. Please read *Matthew 16:13-23*.

1. What question did Jesus pose to His disciples (v.13)? _____

2. How did Peter answer (v. 16), and what did Jesus think about His answer (v. 17)? _____

3. Jesus makes reference to Peter’s confession in v. 18 when He says “upon this rock” [i.e. Peter’s profession in v. 16 that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the Living God”]. What did Jesus say He would build upon this rock? _____
4. What does this tell us about the importance of the church to our Lord, and how should this affect the way we view the church? _____

5. How would you respond to a person who said, “I love Jesus Christ, but I have no place in my life for the church?” _____

B. It is important because of the place the church is given in the New Testament.

Many of the N.T. epistles are addressed to local churches and to the leaders. *Please read Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4.* How does Paul describe those to whom he is writing these N.T. ? _____

C. It is important because of the way the church is described in God’s Word.

1. A _____ of which Christ is Head. (Colossians 1:18a)
2. A _____ of which Christ is the Cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:20, 21)
3. A _____ of whom Christ is the Bridegroom. (Ephesians 5:23-32)
4. A _____ of whom Christ is the Owner. (Titus 2:14)
5. A _____ of which Christ is the Shepherd. (1 Peter 5:2-4)
6. A _____ of which Christ is the Creator. (Ephesians 2:15)
7. A _____ of which Christ is the High Priest. (1 Peter 2:9)
8. An _____ of which Christ is the Heir. (Ephesians 1:18)

D. It is important because of the way New Testament churches kept organized membership rolls.

- The numbers were known (Acts 1:15, 2:41, 4:4).
- Election of officers assumes a roll (Acts 6:2-5).
- Special rolls were kept (1 Timothy 5:9).
- Church discipline assumes a roll (1 Cor. 5:13).

II. THE BENEFITS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Love: Please read John 13:34-35 – The church is a place where you can _____ others and be _____ by others.

Learn: Please read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – The church is a place where you can _____ God’s Word.

Worship: Please read Ephesians 5:19-21 – The church is a place where you can worship God with other believers and _____ spiritual songs together.

Serving: Please read 1 Corinthians 12:4-8 – The church is a place where you can use your spiritual _____ to serve God and others.

III. THE REQUIREMENTS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

When it comes to the matter of requirements for church membership, God’s Word clearly outlines two requirements for church membership. Please re-read Acts 2:41.

A. Salvation by grace alone (Ephesians 2:8-9), through *faith* alone (Romans 10:9), in *Christ* alone (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

"*grace*" = God *giving* something to us that we *do not deserve* (heaven, righteousness, eternal life, etc.).

"*Faith*" = Though it involves knowing and believing that the facts about the *person* and *work* of Christ are *TRUE*, Biblical faith involves the additional aspect of personal trust or dependence upon these truths for your salvation from sin.

How does John 1:12 state this? "*But as many as _____ Him . . .*" This word has the meaning "take hold of" or "grasp." So a person must "grasp" or "take hold" of Him (Christ) as one's own *personal Savior*.

Repentance is NOT merely feeling "sorry" or "remorseful" over your sin. True repentance literally means a "*change of mind*" with reference to sin and God which produces a change in action. What phrase in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 describes true repentance on the part of the Thessalonian believers?

Note: Faith and repentance are two sides of the same coin of salvation.

B. Baptism by immersion AFTER salvation. Please read Matthew 28:19, 20.

1. What are Christ’s four commands in Matthew 28:19, 20?

- #1: _____
- #2: _____
- #3: _____
- #4: _____

2. Baptism is an identification with Jesus Christ and an outward expression of a person’s inward faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection; it is a reminder that you are dead to sin and arisen to walk in newness of life. It’s not a part of salvation, but *evidence* of it! Please read Romans 6:3-6.

3. Which mode of baptism fits the thought of the following passages: sprinkling, pouring, or immersion?

- John 3:23: _____
- Acts 8:36-39: _____
- Romans 6:4, 5: _____
- Colossians 2:12: _____

Understanding the Purpose of Our Church

In 1 Timothy 3:15, the apostle Paul referred to the church as “*the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.*” These words express how important the church is in our Lord’s plan and program. It is not surprising that God gives us clear instruction in the Bible about the purpose of the church. We will organize our study around four key Biblical purposes of the church.

I. WORSHIP

A. The meaning of worship:

In their excellent book Life In the Father’s House, Wayne Mack and David Swavely write:

Our word “worship” is derived from the old English word “worthship,” and that helps us to understand its basic meaning. Worship is acknowledging the unique worth of an object and showing honor and respect to it. So Biblical words like honor, respect, awe, adoration, reverence, and glorifying are often near synonyms for the term “worship,” communicating a similar idea. Obviously this practice is not one that is limited to public gatherings. In fact, in Scripture those terms are used much more often in regard to our personal relationship with God than to our activities in the presence of other Christians.

B. The focus: Please read Psalm 95:6-7b, 96:8-9.

1. Who is to be the focus of our worship? _____

2. What do these verses teach us about our thoughts and actions during corporate worship?

3. What does *Mark 7:6-7* add to our understanding of the focus of our worship?

C. The importance: God commands us to worship – Please read *Deut. 6:13* and *Matthew 4:10*

What do these passages tell us about the importance of worship? _____

D The preparation for our worship:

Being in a right relationship with others. Please read *Matthew 5:23-24*.

How important is solving problems with others? Is a person worshipping Biblically if he has unsolved problems with other people? _____

Charles H. Spurgeon: Spurgeon at His Best, comp. Tom Carter (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), pp. 223-224

There should be some preparation of the heart in coming to the worship of God. Consider who He is in whose name we gather, and surely we cannot rush together without thought. Consider whom we profess to worship, and we shall not hurry into His presence as men run to a fire. Moses, the man of God, was warned to put off his shoes from his feet when God only revealed Himself in a bush. How should we prepare ourselves when we come to Him who reveals Himself in Christ Jesus, His dear Son? There should be no stumbling into the place of worship half asleep, no roaming here as if it were no more than going to a playhouse. We cannot expect to profit much if we bring with us a swarm of idle thoughts and a heart crammed with vanity. If we are full of folly, we may shut out the truth of God from our minds.

2 Understanding the Purpose of Our Church

E. The elements of our worship:

Following the example of the early church (Acts 2:42-47) our worship includes the following elements:

- ❖ **Instruction** – “. . . they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching” (Acts 2:42).
- ❖ **Prayer** – “. . . and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).
- ❖ **Singing** – “. . . speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord . . .” (Ephesians 5:19).
- ❖ **Observing the ordinances** – “. . . those who received His word were baptized. . . . to the breaking of bread . . .” (Acts 2:41-42).
- ❖ **Giving** – “. . . and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need . . .” (Acts 2:45).

II. INSTRUCTION

A. The responsibility to deliver instruction: *Please read 2 Timothy 2:15.*

This verse commands pastors to work hard as they study the Scriptures. What does this verse say will result in the life of a pastor if he *does not* work hard. What will result if he *does* work hard?

B. The responsibility to receive instruction: *Please read James 1:22-25.*

What do these verses tell us about the importance of listening to truth and obeying the Word?

C. The purpose of the instruction: *Please read Ephesians 4:11-17.*

1. What should happen as a result of the instruction we receive from God’s Word? (v. 12)

2. Who should we “become more like” as a result of the instruction we receive? (vv. 13, 15)

3. What pitfalls will be avoided if we carefully receive this instruction? (v. 14)

4. How does “faithful receiving of instruction” affect the overall church body? (v. 16)

III. FELLOWSHIP

From our previous study of Acts 2:41-47, what phrases does this passage contain that illustrate Biblical fellowship? _____

IV. SERVICE

Because this is such an important area of church life, it will be developed fully in Lesson 4 of this series. *For additional understanding of the purpose of our church, please review the following documents:*

- Church Covenant
- Confession of Faith
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Growing In Your Walk With God

Part of our written philosophy of ministry states: Our emphasis is on progressive sanctification, believing that God has a plan for every Christian's growth, and that He wants Godly lives and families built. The apostle Peter wrote, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity" (2 Peter 3:18). In this lesson we will study what God's Word says about how you can grow in your walk with God.

I. THE HOPE FOR CHANGE

A. Other Christians have changed. – Please read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

1. List several of the sinful lifestyles mentioned in verses 9-10: _____

2. Are the sinful habits mentioned in these verses serious? Would you consider them hard to change?

3. What are the first six words of verse 11, and how do they give hope? _____

B. God's Word is sufficient to help us change. – Please read Psalm 19:7 and John 17:17.

1. What means does God use to sanctify (change) people according to these verses?

- ❖ 2 Peter 1:3 "Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence."

2. What words are used in this verse to describe what God has granted to us in His Word?

C. God has promised to help us change.

Because our rate of change and growth affects our relationship with God (and vice versa), it is not surprising to learn that each Person of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) is involved in helping us change.

1. The Father _____ the fruitful vine. (John 15:2)
2. The Son _____ by the water of the Word. (Ephesians 5:26)
3. The Holy Spirit _____ us as we behold Christ's face in the mirror of His Word. (2 Cor. 3:18)

God has promised to help us change; this is not to say that we have no responsibility in the matter. What does 1 Timothy 4:7 say about our responsibility in the process of change? _____

II. THE GOAL OF CHANGE

A. Christlikeness: Please read Romans 8:28-29.

1. What does v. 28 say God will cause all things to work together for? _____
2. What two conditions are given in the second half of v. 28 that must be met before a person can claim the promise that God will cause all things to work together for good?
 - a. to those who _____
 - b. to those who are called according to _____

3. Romans 8:29 explains God’s great purpose for His children with the phrase “*conformed to the _____ of His _____.*”

B Being pleasing to God: *Please read 2 Corinthians 5:9.*

In this verse, Paul explains that the ambition (goal) of a believer should be to please God. What other ambitions might take the place of pleasing God in a believer’s heart and life?

III. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE – *Please read Ephesians 4:22-24.*

God never tells us “the what” without also telling us the “how-to.” This passage outlines a three-step principle for growth.

A. Put Off: *Ephesians 4:22*

We are commanded to lay aside habits associated with the unsaved lifestyle. After a person has identified ways he is unlike Christ, he must determine that he will stop repeating that habit (with God’s help). Just like a person with dirty clothes begins the change process by taking the dirty clothes off, believers identify areas of their lives that are displeasing to God and put that sinful habit off.

B. Change your thinking. *Ephesians 4:23*

A critical part of the change process involves the inner person. In order to change Biblically, a believer must be “renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Christian change is not simply behaviorism. God wants us to become more like Jesus Christ from the inside out.

C. Put On: *Ephesians 4:24*

Paul completes the principle by instructing God’s people to “put on the new self.” A person does not change by simply stopping. Instead, God wants us to practice the principle of replacement - putting off what is wrong and replacing it with what is right. To practice identifying “put-off’s” and “put-on’s”, please complete the following chart after reading the verses in the left column.

Verse	Put Off	Put On
Ephesians 4:26		
Ephesians 4:28		

For additional study, read:

1. Godliness Through Discipline by Jay Adams. This 25 page booklet is based on 1 Timothy 4:7 where Paul said “. . .discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”
2. How to Help People Change by Jay Adams.

Serving Together In Our Church

One of the great joys of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the opportunity to serve in His church. While the idea of serving is often looked down upon in our society, Christians view serving God and others as a high and holy privilege. Jesus is the One who “*emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant*” (Philippians 2:7) and said “*whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant*” (Matthew 20:26). Even heaven is described as a place where “*there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bondservants shall serve Him*” (Revelation 22:3).

I. THE MODEL OF SERVICE – Please read John 13:5-17 and answer the following questions:

A. What was Peter’s initial reaction to Jesus’ offer in v. 8? _____

What does this tell us about Peter’s view of serving? _____

B. What did Jesus ask His disciples at the end of v. 12? _____

Do you believe that by asking this question, Jesus wanted His disciples to think about the literal act of foot-washing, or the principle of serving others? Please explain your answer.

C. How did Jesus want His disciples to be different as a result of hearing this instruction?

D. According to v. 17, what did Jesus say would be the result of “doing” what He said? _____

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE

Many people think of a servant as a person with little ambition, intelligence, giftedness, or skills. However, in the Word of God, being a servant is at “the top of the totem pole”!

A. A sign of Christian greatness: Please read Matthew 20:20-28 and answer the following questions:

1. What request did the mother of Zebedee make in v. 21, and how was her desire for her sons different than Jesus’? _____

2. The people Jesus spoke of in v. 25 were the unsaved rulers of the day. Notice He described their leadership as “lording it over them” or “exercising authority over them.” What words might we use today to describe this kind of leadership? _____

How does Jesus want His children to be different, according to verses 26-28? _____

- B. A matter of stewardship: In 1 Corinthians 4:2 says, “*In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*” In Bible times, a steward was a servant who was entrusted with the care and administration of his master’s household while he was away. The steward’s responsibility was to care for what had been entrusted to him in a way that would please his master when he returned.

Please read Matthew 25:14-27 and answer the following questions.

1. Was there any difference in the master’s commendation to the servants who had earned more than they were originally given? _____
2. What did the master say to the third servant who squandered the opportunity to increase the one talent he was given (see verses 26-27)? _____
3. What is the implication of that when we think of serving in Christ’s church today? _____

III. THE GIFTS OF SERVICE

God never asks us to do something without giving us the resources to accomplish the task.

- A. Spiritual gifts: *Please read 1 Peter 4:10.*

The Word of God teaches that each believer in Jesus Christ has been given at least one spiritual gift. What lessons can we learn about this subject from this important verse? _____

- B. The responsibility of the church: *Please read Ephesians 4:11-12 and answer the following questions:*

We believe we have a responsibility to help each person *IDENTIFY* his/her spiritual gift(s), to *EQUIP* (train) each person to use his/her spiritual gift(s) in local church service, and to *DEPLOY* each equipped person into meaningful aspects of local church service

- C The responsibility of church members: *Please read 1 Cor. 12:7 and answer the following question:*

What would you say to a person who had no interest in using his/her spiritual gift to serve in Christ’s church? _____

IV. THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

Our church is what it is today to a large degree, humanly speaking, because of faithful people who love to sacrificially serve Christ.

- A. Informal opportunities: taking a meal to someone who is ill, being friendly to a guest at church, inviting a friend to a special church event, praying for those in need, thanking someone for working in the nursery, teaching a lesson, etc.
- B. Formal opportunities: Community Ministries, Nursery, Children/Youth Ministry, Ushers/Greeters, Choir/Orchestra, Community Picnic, Vacation Bible School, Drama, Living Nativity, Technical Assistants, Building/Grounds, Snow Removal, Office Assistants, and many more!

A few of the ministry opportunities at our church are designed so that anyone can participate. Most however, require church membership so that we are being responsible to investigate a person’s testimony prior to their serving. Some of the ministry opportunities even require adherence to our church’s Leadership Standards. Please ask one of our pastors or the leader of the particular ministry you are interested in for more specific information.