

# **The Path of Champions**

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**A CLASS FOR NEW MEMBERS**

**LEADER'S GUIDE**

**CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHAMPIONS**

**BY DREW CUSTER**



# The Path of Champions

## A Class for New Members

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### **Class Overview- 12 Sessions**

#### Part 1: The Path of Champions

1. Membership
2. Maturity
3. Ministry
4. Mission

#### Part 2: A Panorama of the Christian Faith

5. God
6. Man
7. Jesus
8. Salvation
9. Holy Spirit
10. The Church- 1
11. The Church- 2
12. The End Times

# What is the “Path of Champions”?

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Psalm 25: 4-7 says:

*“Show me your ways, O LORD,  
teach me your paths;  
guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long.”*

Our life journey is spoken of in the Bible as a path. Everyone is on a path headed in a certain direction. The path we choose can be straight or crooked. This means that we choose a path that leads to death or life. We all choose which path to take in our faith journey. Praise the Lord we are all here this morning because we have chosen to follow the path of the Lord. The Lord’s path leads to salvation and abundant life through Jesus Christ. As the psalmist says above, we are to seek the path of the Lord and he will guide us in the right way.

In another sense of the word, we are glad that our paths have crossed. God has brought us together in our journey of faith to encourage one another as we strive to follow the path of the Lord. The “Path of Champions” class is designed to make clear to you the role that we as a church are to play as we together strive to follow the path of the Lord set out for us in the Scriptures. This class is designed to help encourage you stay the path leading to a mature Christ-centered life.

The Path of Champions class intends to:

- Teach you the basics of membership in the universal body of Christ and of membership in the local body here in the church of Christ in Champions
- Teach you how you can mature in your faith
- Show you how you can be involved in ministry in the congregation
- Empower you to be involved in the mission of God to reach out to others with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Teach you the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith

# Session 1: Membership

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## Overview:

- What is Membership?
- Benefits of Membership
- Our Elders Commitment to You
- Our Expectations of Members
- Our Heritage
- Our Worship
- Our Elders and Ministers

## What is Membership?

The origin of the word “membership” is Christian, but it is used today in our society for many things that were not meant in its original context.

What do you think of when you hear the word membership used in our secular world? What are some ways that you have heard it used?

These “worldly” uses of the word “membership” have detracted from the original intent of the word as described in the Scriptures.

### Read 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27 below:

*<sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by<sup>a</sup> one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

*<sup>14</sup> Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the*

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<sup>a</sup> Or *with*; or *in*

body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

According to this passage, what is the body of Christ?

What are the members of the body and what do they do?

What are some ways that each member is to act toward the other members?

How would you define membership according to this passage?

**In Summary:** All Christians (those saved through faith in Jesus and that have been baptized into Christ) are added as members of the Body of Christ.

Some may ask, “If we are added to the body of Christ when we are saved through our faith and baptism in Christ, then what about ‘placing membership’ at the local congregation? What exactly does ‘placing membership’ mean and is it important?”

It is true that by becoming a Christian we are added to the universal body of Christ, but it is also important that all Christians connect to a local congregation of believers so that they may be encouraged to grow in their faith through communal worship, teaching, fellowship, and service.

### **Read Hebrews 10:23-25**

*“<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

**According to verse 24 what are we to consider doing?**

**According to verse 25 how do we go about doing this?**

As members of the local body of Christ in Champions, we strive to encourage each other when we regularly get together toward love and good deeds. Without being committed to a local body of believers, like the church of Christ in Champions, it is impossible for the Christian to experience the encouragement and growth that the Lord intends for all of His children.

By placing membership with the church of Christ in Champions you are committing to be an active part of the congregation to encourage the local believers in their faith as we are committed to encourage your faith as well.

## Benefits of Membership

In Scripture, we find that there are many benefits to active membership in the body of Christ:

1. Identifies a person as a genuine believer (Ephesians 2:19; Romans 12:5)
2. It provides a spiritual family to support and encourage them in their walk with Christ (Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrew 10:24-25)
3. It provides the environment in order to discover and use their spiritual gifts in ministry (1Cor 12:4-27)
4. It places them under the spiritual protection of godly leaders (Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-29)
5. It gives them the accountability they need to grow (Ephesians 5:21)

## Our Elders Commitment to You

As a member of our local spiritual family, we are committed to the spiritual wellbeing of you and your family in the following ways:

We are committed to:

- ...praying for you and your family**
- ...providing you with spiritual help and guidance**
- ...the spiritual growth of your entire family**
- ...being good stewards of your giving**
- ...supporting you through your struggles and heartache**
- ...shepherding this church with love, grace, and compassion**
- ...leading with humility and openness**
- ...provide you and your family with sound biblical teaching**
- ...showing you love, grace, patience, and forgiveness**

As elders, we are human so we will not be perfect in our commitment, but we will strive to live up to our commitments to the best of our ability as we seek the Lord and lean on Him. We ask that you pray for us as we strive to lead with godliness.



## Expectations of Members

The Lord calls all members of the body of Christ to live in a manner that is worthy of calling that they have received (Ephesians 4:1) The Lord expects us to live in ways that will glorify God in all godliness and righteousness.

As elders, we expect all members of the church of Christ in Champions to:

- Protect the unity of the body (1Cor 1:10)
- Live a holy life pleasing to the Lord (Phil 1:27)
- Faithfully attend Bible classes and worship services (Heb 10:25)
- Seek out meaningful fellowship in the body (Rom 14:19)
- Faithfully devote themselves to personal Bible reading and prayer (1Thess 5:17; 2 Tim 3:16-17))
- Develop a lifestyle of service to the body and community (1Pet 4:10)
- Submit to the leadership of the elders (Heb 13:17)
- Share the good news of Jesus with those in their life (Matt 28:19-20)

## Our Heritage

We in the churches of Christ strive to be simply Christians, no more and no less. We want to be only Christians as described in the Scriptures. We do not want any human traditions or denomination determining what we teach and practice; instead we are committed to following only what was taught us through the Bible. We are not a denomination and have no interest in being one. We want to be simply Christians.

## A Brief History of the Church of Christ in Champions

The church of Christ in Champions, formerly known as Tomball Road church of Christ, met for the first time on September 7, 1941. A desire to have a congregation in this community led several families that were attending the Yale St. Gardens church (249 church now) to meet in the home of W. A. (Al) and Beulah Jackson, located on Perry Road. Times were difficult as WWII began just 4 months later and at least 9 sons were called into active duty. There was no electricity in this rural community at the time; gas rationing and tire shortages made it difficult to travel to services and there wasn't a full time preacher most of the time. But for all the difficulties there were many good memories that children of the founding families can still recall, such as Bible classes in cars, singings every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, baseball games, Dinner on the Grounds, Tent and Brush Arbor Meetings, and baptisms at Cypress Creek.

By 1942 a one-acre tract with a four- room house on the corner of FM 149 (249 now) and Grant Rd. was purchased in the amount of \$1750. This served as the meeting place until May 1953 when the first church building was erected at a cost of \$8409. Shortly after the last payment was made in 1958, additional classrooms were added. Homer Waits and his son H.W. did the majority of the construction. When the building was sold years later it was moved many times for different owners and over a period of thirty years moved back near the original spot on Grant Rd. Today it serves as a restaurant.

In 1967 another building was erected at the same location and included a 230- seat auditorium and classrooms. In 1969 Bobby G. Deason was hired as the first full time minister. The church continued to grow and in 1972 a ten-acre tract of land was purchased from Lola Jackson for \$15,000. At a later date, the ten acres was exchanged for 5.7 acres at our present location. During this time a charter was presented to the congregation and passed, to change the name from Tomball Road church of Christ to the church of Christ in Champions. In April, 1977 a bond issue of \$390,000 was made to finance the first building at this location as well as the preacher's house. From 1977 to 1985 the church enjoyed continued growth and on October 3, 1984, Champions celebrated her 43rd Homecoming with an attendance of 445.

No one would have guessed that just 6 months later, the building would burn to the ground. On the morning of March 6, 1985, a 15 year old teenager broke into the building at 3:30 a.m. setting fire to it and Banff School down the street. While the building was under construction, the church met at Hancock Elementary School for all services. The community watched with great interest as the church and school buildings were rebuilt. With insurance proceeds of \$500,000, donated materials and many, many hours of donated labor, the building was rebuilt and enlarged to the present facility. On April 1, 1992, with the continued blessing of our Lord, the debt on the building was retired.

*As a letter from the elders written for the 55<sup>th</sup> Homecoming states so well..." When established, the church served a rural community where the members had deep roots and raised their families. Today, the church is a suburban area where society forces many to be transient. However, through these years and changes, the one constant factor has been and will be our common love of the Lord that binds us together as his people. No matter how time and distance may separate us, the love and friendships we develop at Champions will survive....Let's rededicate ourselves and prepare for the joys and struggles of the future. When the Lord comes again to call us to our heavenly home, wherever we may be, may he find us working in his service.*

## Our Worship

Read Revelation 15:3-4 (NIV) below:

*“Great and marvelous are your deeds,  
Lord God Almighty.  
Just and true are your ways,  
King of the ages.  
Who will not fear you, O Lord,  
and bring glory to your name?  
For you alone are holy.  
All nations will come  
and worship before you,  
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

We worship the Lord because he alone is holy. We worship him because of who he is and because of the marvelous things he has done.

How would you define worship?

The Hebrew and Greek words used for “worship” in the Bible literally mean “to bow down.” The idea is that one postures oneself before God to show honor, reverence, and thanksgiving.

Worship is to be both private and public. God wants everyone to personally worship God daily by the way they live (Rom 12:1). In Scripture, God’s people have always gathered together for a special time of communal worship. Christians gathered together on the first day of the week for communal worship. During worship they engaged in several important acts. Some are:

1. Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1Cor 11:17-34)
2. Prayer (1 Timothy 2:1)
3. Singing (Ephesians 5:19-20)
4. Preaching (Acts 5:42)
5. Communion (1 Cor 16:1-3)

Scripture teaches that men are to have positions of authority and teaching during the times of communal worship (1Tim 2:11-12; 1Cor 14:34). Based on these Scriptures we have only men leading the acts of worship. We also have only men teaching our adult Bible classes. Women are welcome and encouraged to teach women's and children's classes.

Our desire is that our worship services are planned and conducted in a way that are pleasing to God and that builds up the body of Christ.

### **Our Elders and Ministers**

The elders and ministers are here to help you in your walk with the Lord. We are glad that you are placing membership with us and we take our responsibility to guide you and your family in their spiritual growth very seriously.

We look forward to getting to know you!

# Session 2: Maturity

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## Overview:

- Meant to Mature
- Roots of Maturity
- Bible Reading
- Prayer
- Conclusion

## Meant to Mature

God's work in us does not stop when we become a saved member of His body. We are not to be content to be saved, we are meant to mature. Jesus explained the idea of maturity or spiritual growth using parables.

### Read Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:3-8:

<sup>3</sup> "Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

**Now read Jesus' explanation of the parable in Mathew 13:18-23:**

<sup>18</sup> *"Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. <sup>22</sup> The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

**According to this parable what are some things that can stunt our spiritual growth?**

**What happened to the seed that fell on the good soil?**

**What was it about the good soil that allowed it to bear a significant crop?**

Jesus teaches his disciples that when the gospel is planted in our hearts we are to grow, put down roots, and bear fruit. He explained that we do this by letting the gospel get deep into our hearts, not allowing the worries of this world, wealth, suffering, pain, and sin take our faith away. If this happens, we do not grow and eventually our faith dies or does not bear fruit. God does not intend for this to happen. Instead, God wants us to grow or mature in Christ, by keeping our hearts pure and our deeds good.

**Read Ephesians 4:11-16:**

*<sup>11</sup> “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

**According to verse 12, what are the leaders of the church supposed to prepare God’s people for?**

**According to verse 13, what is the goal of all the preparation and service?**

**What/Who is our standard for spiritual maturity?**

**According to verse 14, without maturity in Christ what are we like?**

**What does verse 15 say about maturity?**

## Read 2 Corinthians 3:18:

*<sup>18</sup> “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

In this passage we learn that the work of becoming like Jesus is not only something we should strive to do but ultimately it is something that only the Lord can do. We are transformed into his likeness through the Spirit.

In the three above passages we learn that we can never be content in our faith but should always strive to grow in our faith. Our goal is to grow into the “fullness of Christ.” In other words, we need to seek to mold our character to become more and more like Jesus every day.

The practical question is, “how do we do this?” How do we grow spiritually?

## The Roots of Maturity

In order to mature in our faith and to bear fruit in our lives we must have deep roots. Just as roots give stability and health to a plant so we need deep spiritual roots that do the same.

## Read Acts 2:42-47

*<sup>42</sup> “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*



**What are some of the things in which the early church was involved?**

Similarly, I believe that some roots that lead to Spiritual maturity are:

- Bible Reading
- Prayer
- Worship
- Fellowship
- Service

Let's look at a couple of these a little closer:

## **Bible Reading**

**Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17:**

*<sup>14</sup> "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, <sup>15</sup> and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*

**In verse 15, what does Paul say is the first function of Scripture?**

**At the beginning of verse 16 what makes Scripture different from any other book?**

## What are the four functions of Scripture mentioned in verse 16?

### According to verse 17 what is the goal of Scripture?

The Lord has given us the Scriptures to bring us knowledge of God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. God has also given us the Scriptures to show us how to live a righteous life. In order to grow in our faith in Jesus Christ we need to read, know, and apply the Word of God in our lives. If we do not spend time reading God's Word we can lose sight of the life that God has called us to live. This is why it is important to spend time putting God's Word in our hearts and in our minds regularly.

### Different kinds of Bible Reading:

- Big Picture Reading- Reading entire books of the bible in a short amount of time to get the overall picture of what is being taught.
- Devotional Reading- Reading a short passage of Scripture with a listening posture to apply it to your life.
- Bible Study- Reading a book of the Bible or a shorter passage along with other tools in order to gain a greater grasp of what is being taught.
- Topical Study- Reading selected passages that relate to each other in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.

### Tools for good Bible Study:

- Good Translation

Literal	Thought	Paraphrase
NASB, KJV, NRSV	NIV, NLT	LB, Message

- Bible Dictionary
  - New International Bible Dictionary (Zondervan)
- Bible Commentaries

## Prayer

It is clear throughout the New Testament that prayer is to be an important part of the life of a Christian. Paul says, "Pray Continually" (1Thess 5:17). In the book of Acts, we see the early Christians dedicated themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42). Prayer is to be an active part of the private and communal life of the Christian.

### Read Matthew 5:5-8

<sup>5</sup> *"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. <sup>6</sup> But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. <sup>8</sup> Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

**In what ways should we pray differently than the Pharisees and the pagans?**

**According to this passage what do you think is the goal of prayer?**

### Read the rest of the passage in Matthew 5:9-13:

<sup>9</sup> *"This, then, is how you should pray:  
"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> Give us today our daily bread.  
<sup>12</sup> Forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup> And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one."*

### **Observations on the Lord's Prayer:**

- Praise your heavenly Father
- Focus on learning His will
- Pray for what you need
- Ask for forgiveness
- Pray for strength to overcome temptation

### **Balanced A.C.T.S. Prayer:**

A—Adoration: Praise the Lord

C—Confession: Confess your sins

T—Thanksgiving: Thank the Lord for what he has done for you (Phil 1:3)

S—Supplication: Ask the Lord for what you need and pray for others

**In these passages we learn that through prayer God gives us significant things. What are some things that he gives us?**

### **Conclusion:**

We learned today the importance to continually grow or mature in Christ through Bible study and prayer. These roots of maturity will help keep us stable and healthy in our day to day lives. We must also remember to keep these practices together with communal fellowship, worship, and service. Next week, we will look at our role as ministers in this world to serve others for Christ.

# Session 3: Ministry

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## Overview:

- The Greatest Servant
- Created to Serve
- Spiritual Gifts
- Ministry at Champions

## The Greatest Servant

Today's Session is about ministry, which literally means service. Service was a significant reason for our Savior's coming. Jesus also expected his disciples to be servants.

### Read Matthew 20:25-28:

*<sup>25</sup> "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Was service important to Jesus? What did he say about service in relation to his disciples?**

**Read John 13: 2-5, 12-17:**

<sup>2</sup> *“The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. <sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

<sup>12</sup> *When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. <sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.”*

**What is so significant about Jesus (the Son of God who had all power) washing his disciple’s feet?**

**In verses 14-15, what was he trying to accomplish through washing their feet?**

**According to verse 17, what will happen if we follow his example?**

Jesus not only came to serve but to die for us and he expects the way he lived to be imitated by his followers. We are expected to serve others as Christ has served us.

## Created to Serve

**Read Ephesians 2:8-10:**

*<sup>8</sup> “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

**In verse 8-9, what is the relationship between salvation and works (service)?**

**According to verse 10, what have we been created to do?**

**What does this say to you about the role that service/ministry should play in your life?**

## Gifted to Serve

**Read Romans 12:4-8:**

*<sup>4</sup> “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.”*

**What does this passage say about the function of each member in the body of Christ?**

**How does one determine what their God given gifts are to serve the Lord and others?**

## **PLACE Assessment**

The Church of Christ in Champions offers a 5-session personal or small group study using the PLACE materials. This personalized study helps individual members discover their uniqueness in order to better help them serve the Lord.

The 5 PLACE sessions are:

1. **P**ersonality Discovery
2. **L**earning Spiritual Gifts
3. **A**ilities Awareness
4. **C**onnecting Passion with Ministry
5. **E**xperiences of Life

Let Drew Custer know if this is something that would interest you. It can be personalized to fit your schedule.



## Ministry Opportunities with Champions

We in the Champions congregation believe strongly that everyone should be equipped to be serving as the Lord has gifted them.

### Read Ephesians 4:11-13:

<sup>11</sup> *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

**MINISTRYCONNECT** is the name of our involvement ministry which strives to connect all of our members with areas of service to the Glory of God.



We ask all of our members to fill out the **MINISTRYCONNECT Involvement Sheet** to let us know where they would like to serve. In order to help you fill out the Involvement Sheet we encourage you to consult the **MINISTRYCONNECT Catalog**. The catalog is designed to let you know what ministries are going on in this congregation and to show you what ministry areas need your help. Read through this catalog to see where you are needed and to see which ministries best fit your passions, gifts, and talents. The catalog also includes the ministry leader or deacon that is in charge of each of our ministries.

These can be found on our website ([www.championschurch.org](http://www.championschurch.org)) or in the church office (281-440-9898).

# Session 4: Mission

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## Overview:

- The Great Commission
- Seeking the Lost
- The Harvest is Ready
- Tools for the Harvest
- Conclusion

## The Great Commission

We have seen so far the importance of membership in the body of Christ, maturity in Christ, and ministry for Christ. In this session we will look at the mission given us by Christ.

### Read Matthew 28:18-20:

*<sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

**This passage is called by many the 'great commission.' What does Jesus commission his disciples to do?**

*Go, Make disciples, baptize, and teach*

**What does ‘making disciples’ mean? Who are we to make disciple of?**

*Literally means pupil. We are to make disciples of Jesus.*

**What is significant about Jesus saying that he would be with them till the very end of the age?**

*The commission is empowered by Jesus. We do not do it alone.*

From this passage we have learned of the mission, or commission, that the Lord has given his disciples. Now let’s think a little deeper about why Jesus would want disciples to be made of the whole world.

## **Seeking the Lost**

Throughout the New Testament we are taught about how much God loves all of mankind. This love for us is what motivated God to send Jesus to die for us (John 3:16). Jesus was on a mission to seek and save the lost like us. Jesus cares about everyone and he expects his disciples to express this kind of love as well.

**Read Luke 15:3-7:**

<sup>3</sup> *“Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”*

**What does it tell you about God that he left the 99 to go after the lost one?**

**What does it tell you that Jesus rejoiced when he found the sheep and that there is such great rejoicing in Heaven when one sinner repents?**

**What application can we make from this parable to evangelism?**

This parable shows how valuable each person is to God. It especially shows how important it is for sinners to be reconciled with the Lord. What drives the mission of God to make disciples of the world is how valuable each of us are to God and how he wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

## **The Harvest is Ready**

**Read John 4:34-38:**

*<sup>34</sup> “My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. <sup>36</sup> Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. <sup>37</sup> Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.”*

**In verse 34, what does Jesus mean by his “food” as “to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work?”**

**What does he mean by the field “are ripe for harvest?”**

**What is the relationship between what Jesus called his “food” and evangelism?**

## **Tools for the Harvest**

There are many tools for helping lead someone to Christ.

Some that I find helpful:

- Jerry Tallman, *His Eternal Plan*
- H2O: A Journey of Faith (DVD)

**What are some tools that you have used that have been proven successful tools in leading others to Christ?**

## **Conclusion:**

We learned today that we have been commissioned as disciples of Jesus to go and make more disciples of Jesus. We do this because of how much God has loved us and how much he loves everyone who many not yet know him. We know that the harvest is ready and that we should work hard to take the good news of Christ into the world.

# Session 5: God

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## Overview:

- The God Who Is
- God: Three in One
- Relational God
- Creator God

## The God Who Is

### Read Hebrews 11:6:

<sup>6</sup> *“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”*

Fundamental to our faith is that God exists and that we worship the only true God. We also believe that God is to be sought and he can be known. In this study we will see that God can be known in three important ways.

God is:

- Three in One
- Relational
- Creator

## God: Three in One

The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, but it is often used to describe the three-fold identity of God. God is seen in Scripture as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.

### Read 2 Corinthians 13:14:

<sup>14</sup> *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”*

There has been much debate in the church as to how to understand the God as Three in One. The church councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the 300’s were important to bringing some uniformity into our understanding of God. They concluded, based on Scripture, that God is to be understood as “one essence—three persons.”

### Read Deut 6:4-5:

<sup>4</sup> *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God. How are we then to think about God as Three in One?

### Different in Origin and Function:

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not different in “essence,” they are all fully divine, but they are different in origin and function.

As far as different in origin, the Son came from the Father (John 1:1-14) and the Holy Spirit came from the Father through Jesus Christ (John 16).

As far as different in function, the Son came to bring redemption to man through his death as man (Phil 2:6-8), and the Spirit convicts, comforts, and empowers man (John 16).

## Relational God

### Read 1 John 1:1-3:

<sup>1</sup> *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup> We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”*

### In verse 2, what has appeared to us which was with the Father?

Eternal Life

### According to verse 3, what is the word that describes our relationship with the Father and the Son?

Fellowship

Ultimately, God is a relational being who desires to have a relationship with us through Jesus Christ.

### Nature of the Relational God:

- God is Spirit (John 4:24)
- God is Creator (Gen 1:1)
- God is in heaven (Eccl 5:2; Isa 6:1)
- God is all-present (Acts 17:27-28)
- God is all-knowing (Ps 139; Isa 46:10)
- God is all-powerful (Job 42:2; Matt 19:26)
- God is Holy (Isa 6:1-8)
- God is Compassionate (Isa 54:8)
- God is Love (1 John 3:16)



## **Creator God**

### **Read 1 Corinthians 8:6:**

<sup>6</sup> *“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”*

### **Read John 1:1-3:**

<sup>1</sup> *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”*

### **Read Romans 9:19-21**

<sup>19</sup> *“One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” <sup>20</sup> But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”*

# Session 6: Man

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## Overview:

- The Creation of Man
- Male and Female
- Man's Sin

## The Creation of Man

In the first chapters of the Bible we learn that God created the world as we know along with mankind. Let's discuss quickly the some important points about our creation:

### *1. We are created for God's glory*

#### **Read Isaiah 43:6-7:**

"Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

We have been created for the glory of God. Humanity finds its sense of destiny in God. We have been created for God and for his purposes.

### *2. We are created in the image of God*

#### **Read Genesis 1:26:**

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Being created in the “image of God” means that we are like God in many ways. We share characteristics with our creator in ways that other created things do not.

### **What are some ways that we are like God?**

Love, relational, goodness, righteousness

### *3. We are created as body and spirit*

The Bible teaches that man is made up of many different parts. All of man’s parts can be divided into two major parts: body and spirit.

#### **Read 2 Corinthians 7:1:**

*“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”*

Our body is our physical or fleshly existence in this physical world. Our spirit is our inner-self, the part of us that cannot be seen. Our spirit is also spoken of as our soul, heart, and mind.

## **Male and Female**

#### **Read Genesis 1:27:**

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

It is clear from Scripture that God purposed for humanity to be both male and female. Men and women share the fact that they are created in the image of God. They are both loved by God and are very important to God. Men and women are different though in their roles within the home and in the church.

## 1. Husbands and Wives in the Home

### Read Colossians 3:18-19:

<sup>18</sup> *“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”*

The Bible teaches that men are to provide leadership over the home in love for their wives as Christ loved and died for the church. The wives are to submit to the God-given leadership of their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-33). This leadership is a huge responsibility for the husband and should not be taken lightly. This leadership is not to be done with harsh power but in patient love.

## 2. Men and Women in the Church

### Read 1 Timothy 2:11-12:

<sup>11</sup> *“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. <sup>12</sup> I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”*

It is clear from Scripture that God intends for men to provide the authority and teaching roles in the church. This does not mean that women are any less important or that they are not to contribute to the work of the Lord in significant ways, only that the roles of public teaching and authority of the church should be done by men.

## Man’s Sin

John says that “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Sin is our disobedience of God’s will through external actions or internal attitudes. Bible clearly teaches that mankind sins when they do not do what God has commanded and also when man’s heart is not right in its nature. God cares not only what we do externally but about our hearts as well (Matthew 5:22 and 5:28).

**Read Romans 5:12:**

*<sup>12</sup> “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.”*

We learn in this passage that sin entered the world through the sin of Adam. We also learn that because of sin death entered the world. Adam’s sin has affected all men in the sense that we are all guilty because we fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All men have a sinful nature that rebels against God (Romans 7:7-24). Scripture also makes it clear that because of our sinfulness we have been separated from God and are deserving of death and everlasting punishment.

**Read Romans 5:8:**

*<sup>8</sup> “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Through Christ’s death we are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ and by washing away our sins in baptism. We respond to the love of Christ for us by living righteous lives free from sin.

**Read Romans 6:11-14:**

*<sup>11</sup> “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

When we become alive to God in Jesus through faith and baptism, we are dying to self and committing to live our lives free from the reign of sin. Through Christ, we are committed to living for righteousness instead of sin.

# Session 7: Jesus

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## Overview:

- Jesus Christ: Son of God
  - Jesus is fully God
  - Jesus is fully Man
- The Mission of Jesus

## Jesus Christ: Son of God

The New Testament begins by announcing that Jesus is the Christ (Matt 1:1). The Christ, or Messiah, was prophesied in the Old Testament as the coming anointed king of Israel in the line of David that was to bring salvation to God's people. The first four books of the New Testament, the Gospels, go on to show that Jesus is indeed the Christ proven by his sinless life, miracles, teachings, death, resurrection and ascension. Jesus' identity as the Son of God is grounded in the fact that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

### 1. Jesus is Fully God

#### Read Matthew 16:13-16:

*<sup>13</sup> When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" <sup>14</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."*

*<sup>15</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

This passage shows that Peter, and many of the other disciples, believed that Jesus was not just the Christ but also the Son of God. Peter showed that they believe Jesus to be divine in his identity.

## **Some Scriptures teaching the divinity of Jesus:**

### **Read John 1:1, 14:**

<sup>1</sup> *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

<sup>14</sup> *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

### **Read Romans 9:5:**

<sup>5</sup> *Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”*

### **Read 2 Peter 1:1:**

<sup>1</sup> *“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.”*

### **Read Hebrews 1:8:**

<sup>8</sup> *“But about the Son he says,*

*“Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.”*

## **Why do you think it is important that Jesus is fully God?**

Only God could bear the full penalty of sin- perfect sacrifice. Salvation comes from God not man. Only a divine person can be a mediator between God and all of mankind. Only a divine person can show us what God is like

## **2. Jesus is Fully Man**

Equally as important as Jesus being fully God is the truth that Jesus is fully human. Read the following Scriptures about the humanity of Jesus:

### **Read Luke 2:52:**

*“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”*

### **Read Hebrews 2:17-18:**

<sup>17</sup> *“For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”* <sup>18</sup> *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

### **Read Hebrews 4:15-16:**

<sup>15</sup> *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”* <sup>16</sup> *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

### **Read 1 Peter 2:21-22:**

<sup>21</sup> *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* <sup>22</sup> *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

### **Why do you think it is necessary for Jesus to be fully human?**

- Perfect Obedience (Rom 5:18-19; Heb 4:15)
- Substitute Sacrifice (Heb 2:17-18)
- Mediator between God and Man (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 4:15-16)
- Example for Us (1 Peter 2:21-22)



## The Mission of Jesus

What God sent Jesus to accomplish is only possible if Jesus is fully human and fully God as we have already learned. The divinity and humanity of Jesus is perfectly displayed in his birth. Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary by the hand of the Spirit of God. Jesus later said, “For this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth” (John 18:37). Jesus was born of man and God to bring the truth of the salvation that is available through faith in him.

### Read John 3:16:

*<sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

### Read Romans 3:23-26:

*<sup>21</sup> “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”*

Jesus’ mission was to bring salvation to mankind. He came as a man to die for us taking away our well-deserved penalty of death. Jesus came into the world as a man to show his love for us and to show us how to live. He was crucified, was resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven where he is today. One day he will return and take the faithful with him to experience eternal reward in Heaven. For him we are thankful and we praise God for his saving work through Jesus Christ his Son!

# Session 8: Salvation

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## Overview:

- The Gospel
- Conversion
  - Repentance
  - Faith
  - Baptism

## The Gospel

The word “gospel” means “good news.” When we speak of salvation we have to begin with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ’s mission was to bring salvation to sinful man. This is good news for us who were enemies of God through our sin. But what exactly is the message of the gospel?

### Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8:

<sup>1</sup> “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.”

This passage explains that the message of the gospel includes:

1. Christ's death for our sins.
2. He was buried and he was raised on the third day.
3. He appeared after his resurrection to many early followers.

God did all these things through Jesus because he loved us so much (John 3:16). Man cannot save himself from sin; instead, salvation is a gift of God for those who believe in him.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-10:**

*<sup>1</sup> “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

This important passage highlights some important points about salvation:

- We were dead in our sins because of our disobedience.
- God is filled with love, kindness, and mercy toward us.
- We are saved by God’s grace in Christ through faith, not by works.
- We are saved to do good works.

## Conversion

The gift of salvation is given freely to all who have faith in him, confess his name, repent from their life of sin, and are baptized. In order to understand this more, let's look at three important biblical themes: faith, repentance, and baptism.

### 1. Faith

#### Read Luke 5:18-20:

<sup>18</sup> *Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. <sup>19</sup> When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. <sup>20</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."*

#### Read Romans 3:23-26:

<sup>21</sup> *"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

#### Why is the idea of receiving righteousness through faith so important?

We are not made righteous through the law or by any other means. God made us right through Jesus and forgives us of our sins in spite of our wrong doing. We are made righteous by God's grace.

### 2. Repentance

#### Read Luke 24:45-47:

<sup>45</sup> *"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the*

third day,<sup>47</sup> and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

### **Read Acts 2:38:**

<sup>38</sup> “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”

### **What does Repentance mean?**

Turning away from sin and turning to walk toward righteousness. It is a change of mind, attitudes and behaviors.

## **3. Baptism**

### **Read Ephesians 4:4-5:**

<sup>4</sup> “There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

### **Read Romans 6:1-4:**

<sup>1</sup> “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

### **In baptism:**

- We die to sin and are raised to new life in Christ (Romans 6:4)
- Receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
- We are united into the one body of Christ (Eph 4:4-5)

# Session 9: Holy Spirit

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## Overview:

- God's Work in the World
- The Spirit before Pentecost
- The Spirit after Pentecost
- Conclusion

## God's Work in the World

The Holy Spirit is the third person, or personality, of the one God. The Hebrew and Greek words used for the Spirit literally mean "wind or breath." The Spirit is not to be thought of as a separate divine entity but the "Spirit of God." He is the arm of God's work in the world. In other words, God worked and continues to work in the world today through His Spirit. The identity and work of the Holy Spirit is tied to the will and nature of the Father (John 4:24; 14:26; 16:7).

## The Spirit before Pentecost

In the Old Testament we see that the Spirit of God was active:

- As an agent in creation (Gen 1:1; Ps 33:6; 104:30)
- In providing and guiding the people of Israel (Isa 63:10-14)
- In giving special skills to certain people (Ex 31:3; Judg 3:10)
- By Inspiring the Prophets (Nub 11:29; 1Sam 10:6,10; Hos 9:7)

One particular theme that is very significant in the Old Testament was the promise of an outpouring of God's Spirit in a special way never experienced before.

**Read Joel 2:28-32:**

<sup>28</sup> *"And afterward,*

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.*

*Your sons and daughters will prophesy,*

*your old men will dream dreams,*

*your young men will see visions.*

<sup>29</sup> *Even on my servants, both men and women,*

*I will pour out my Spirit in those days.*

<sup>30</sup> *I will show wonders in the heavens*

*and on the earth,*

*blood and fire and billows of smoke.*

<sup>31</sup> *The sun will be turned to darkness*

*and the moon to blood*

*before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*

<sup>32</sup> *And everyone who calls*

*on the name of the LORD will be saved;*

*for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem*

*there will be deliverance,*

*as the LORD has said,*

*among the survivors*

*whom the LORD calls."*

There was an expectation in Israel that the coming Messiah would bring a fuller outpouring of the Spirit on the people of God. This passage was quoted by the apostle Peter on Pentecost to testify that this day had arrived (Acts 2). The outpouring of Spirit meant that God was present in a special way accompanied by salvation and power. This background gives a clearer meaning to Peter's word, *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

During his life, Jesus taught of the coming Spirit to those that believe in him. This Spirit would not come until Christ had been ascended.

**Read John 7:37-39:**

<sup>37</sup> *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

Later in the gospel of John, Jesus teaches more about the role of the Holy Spirit:

**Read John 16:7-15:**

<sup>7</sup> *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

<sup>12</sup> *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup> He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”*

The Counselor’s role according to Jesus is:

- To be present with believers bringing comfort.
- To convict the world of sin.
- Help believers remember what Jesus said.
- Guide believers into all truth.



## The Spirit after Pentecost

In Acts 2, the Spirit descends on the disciples in a special way allowing them to preach the gospel in different languages to many Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem to observe the Pentecost. This outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost marks the beginning of God's presence among the church, the believers of Christ. That day 3,000 were baptized for the forgiveness of sins and received the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

In Acts 10-11, the Spirit is poured out on Cornelius' household when Peter preached the gospel to them and they are baptized. This showed that God's mission of salvation through Christ was not just for the Jews but for all mankind.

In the letters of the New Testament, which were written after Pentecost, we learn the following things:

- The Spirit is constantly at work in the lives of believers (Rom 8:1-27)
- He gives gifts (1Cor 12:14)
- Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19)
- He develops in us the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23)
- Being filled with the Spirit means living a life fitting with our Lord (Eph 5:18)

## Conclusion

The work of the Holy Spirit is to be thought of as the work of God in the world today. The Father and the Spirit are not different beings or Gods but they are the same one God. The Spirit of God is God's arm at work in the world striving to convict the world of the truth of Jesus Christ. He works to encourage, strengthen, and grow our faith as we strive to become like Jesus. He does this by giving us gifts, reminding us of the truths of Jesus, and by being the comforting presence of God for the church until the Lord returns.

# Session 10: The Church: Part 1

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## Overview:

- Identity of the Church
  - Covenant Community
  - The Body of Christ
- Purpose of the Church
  - Upward: Worship
  - Inward: Maturity
  - Outward: Outreach

## Identity of the Church

The identity of the church is grounded in what Jesus has done for us on the cross. What is the church in the most basic sense? The church is the community that has made Jesus both Lord and Savior because of what he has done for them.

The church includes all true follower of Jesus anywhere and anytime. The word “Church” is used to denote the universal body of believers but also to refer to the local congregation. The word “church” comes from the Greek word “ekklesia” literally meaning “called out,” but the word was often used in the first century to refer to an “assembly.” The true identity and purpose of the church can be seen in its original meaning and by its use in the first century.

### 1. Covenant Community

The identity of the church is tied to the concept of the covenant which goes back to the Old Testament. God entered covenants with the descendants of Abraham, which became the Israelites, and also gave them the Law through the Moses. Through these covenants entered a special relationship with Israel.

The Scriptures tell us that the church, through Jesus Christ, enjoys a new covenant not bound by the old law or covenants. The church is God's people through Jesus.

**Read 2 Corinthians 6:16:**

*<sup>16</sup> "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"*

In this passage we see covenant language used to describe the church. The church is the place where God dwells and we are his people.

**Read 1 Peter 2:9-12:**

*<sup>9</sup> "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

*<sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."*

**What does this passage say about the identity of the church?**

**How are we to live once we are God's people?**

## **2. The Body of Christ**

There are many metaphors used in the New Testament to describe the church including: family, bride of Christ, branch on a vine, a harvest, a new temple, and God's house. The multiplicity of metaphors gives us many different ideas of what

the church is to be. It is important to keep these different metaphors in our minds. One particularly helpful metaphor is Paul's description of the church as the body of Christ.

**Read Ephesians 1:22-23:**

<sup>22</sup> *“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

**Read Ephesians 4:15-16:**

<sup>15</sup> *“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

**1 Corinthians 12:27:**

<sup>27</sup> *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”*

**How does thinking of the church as the body of Christ teach us about the identity of the church? How does thinking of the church as the body of Christ give us clues as to what the purpose of the church should be?**

## **The Purpose of the Church**

The purpose of the church can be summarized in the following way: Upward, Inward, and Outward.

### **1. Upward to God: Worship**

The church exists to worship God by giving him honor and glory with their lives. This is done privately through holy living and through communal acts of worship.

<sup>16</sup> *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Col 3:16)*

## **2. Inward to Believers: Maturity**

We already spent an entire class studying how God desires all Christians to mature constantly in their faith and grow in their likeness of Christ.

<sup>13</sup> *“...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (Eph 4:13)*

## **3. Outward to the World: Outreach**

God intends for all men to become true worshipers of God through genuine faith in Jesus Christ. Outreach happens through proclamation of the gospel called evangelism. Service to others is an important ingredient in reaching out to the world.

<sup>3</sup> *“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, <sup>4</sup> who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Tim 2:3-4)*

<sup>10</sup> *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph 2:10)*

## **Conclusion**

Our identity and purpose is found in Jesus Christ. We have been called to salvation through Jesus Christ and we are “called out” to be the Lord’s body to one another and to the world as we worship God, mature in Christ, and reach out to the world.

# Session 11: The Church: Part 2

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## Overview:

- Two Acts of Commitment
  - Baptism
  - The Lord's Supper
- The Leadership of the Church
  - Elders
  - Deacons

## Two Acts of Commitment

In the New Testament it is clear that there are two significant practices of church that find their origin and meaning from Jesus and his sacrifice. These acts of commitment are baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Baptism, a believer commits to live their life with Jesus as Lord and Savior. In the Lord's Supper, the child of God recommits its life to Christ as it remembers Jesus' sacrifice for him.

### 3. Baptism

The Greek word *baptizo* means "to immerse" in water. This practice of immersion in water was done commonly in Jewish and pagan religious cleansings, but the true beginnings of Christian baptism is found in Christ's baptism by John the Baptist as witnessed to in the Gospels (Matt 4). It is pretty clear that the early church practiced believers immersion (Acts 8:38-39). Over time the church strayed from immersion and allowed pouring and sprinkling of water on those confessing Christ as Lord and Savior. Eventually, even belief wasn't necessary when the church began baptizing infants. This is unfortunate because Scripture is clear about baptism being a believer's initiation into faith by immersion.

### **Read Acts 2:38:**

<sup>38</sup> *“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”*

### **Read Ephesians 4:4-5:**

<sup>4</sup> *“There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

### **Read Romans 6:1-4:**

<sup>1</sup> *“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*

### **In baptism:**

- We die to sin and are raised to new life in Christ (Romans 6:4)
- Receive the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38)
- We are united into the one body of Christ (Eph 4:4-5)

## **4. The Lord’s Supper**

If baptism is the act of commitment to Christ then the Lord’s Supper is the church’s act of regular recommitment to the gospel that was accepted in baptism. The Lord’s Supper is the church’s public memorial of Jesus’ sacrifice for our sins on the cross. In the Lord’s Supper we partake of symbols, bread and juice from

the vine, in remembrance of Jesus' body that was broken and blood that was spilt. In the early church, the Lord's Supper was the central act of worship.

### **Read Matthew 26:26-29:**

<sup>26</sup> *"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

<sup>27</sup> *Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. <sup>28</sup> This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."*

### **Read 1 Cor 11:23-26:**

<sup>23</sup> *"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." <sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

### **Read Acts 20:7:**

<sup>7</sup> *"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."*

### **The Lord's Supper:**

- Is taken to remember the Lord's death on the cross (1Cor 11:24-35)
- Is to be observed every first day of the week (Acts 20:7)
- Is taken in obedience to Christ (Matt 26:26)
- Focuses on the future coming of Christ (1Cor 11:26; Matt 26:29)



## The Leadership of the Church

We have already seen that the body of Christ is to be equipped by its leaders for service unto maturity in Jesus Christ (Eph 4:11ff). The local churches are to be led by a plurality of elders, shepherds, or overseers, who care for the spiritual wellbeing of the congregation. The local church is also to be served by deacons, who bless the congregation in a variety of ways.

### Read 1 Timothy 3:2-10:

<sup>2</sup> *“Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) <sup>6</sup> He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. <sup>7</sup> He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.*

<sup>8</sup> *Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>9</sup> They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup> They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.”*

### Conclusion:

In the last two weeks we have attempted a brief survey of the identity, purpose, practices, and organization of the church. I pray that this overview will give you a better understanding of your part in the body of Christ, His church. I hope that we all grasp our identity as children of God who have been given a purpose to worship God, edify our fellow believers, and reach out to the world. We have taken on this identity through baptism and remind ourselves of it every week as we remember the Lord’s sacrifice during the Lord’s Supper.

# Session 12: The End Times

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## Overview:

- Introduction
- Final Judgment
- The Return of Christ
- Other Significant Scriptures

## Introduction

This final session will cover what the Bible teaches about the final judgment and the return of Christ at the end of our lives and the end of the world as we know it. In many ways, talking about the end of life and the end of the world is incorrect. In reality, it is not the end but a transition or transformation of life and the world that comes with the return of Christ.

## Final Judgment

Death is one of the constant ingredients of human life. Someone has said, “The one thing you can count on in life is death.” Another has said, “As soon as we begin living, we begin dying.” We were created as finite beings. Our physical bodies were not created to live forever. The Bible teaches that at the end of time there will be a time of judgment when we will be judged by our faith and deeds.

### **Read Revelation 20:11-15:**

<sup>11</sup> “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. <sup>14</sup> Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. <sup>15</sup> If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

### **Read Acts 17:30-31:**

<sup>31</sup> “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

### **Nature of the Final Judgment:**

- Jesus Christ will be the judge (2 Tim 4:1)
- Believers and Unbelievers will be judged (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 2:5-7)
- The Living and the Dead will be judged (Acts 10:42)
- Those found righteous will go to heaven (Matt 25:46)
- The wicked will experience eternal punishment (Matt 25:46)

### **Implications of Final Judgment:**

- God will bring ultimate justice to the world.
- Enables us to forgive others (Rom 12:19)
- Gives us motivation for righteous living
- Gives us motivation for evangelism (2Pet 3:9)

## The Return of Christ

Jesus and the New Testament taught that after Jesus' resurrection and ascension that he would return. Jesus promised this and so did the angels at his empty tomb. The apostles in the New Testament taught this quite frequently.

### Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:3:

<sup>13</sup> *"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. <sup>15</sup> According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage each other with these words.*

<sup>1</sup> *Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, <sup>2</sup> for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape."*

### Read Titus 2:12-13:

<sup>12</sup> *"It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."*

### Read Mark 12:32-37:

<sup>32</sup> *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants*

*in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.*

<sup>35</sup> *“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”*

### **Nature of the Return of Christ:**

- It will be a sudden, visible, and bodily return of Christ (Mark 13; 1Thess 4)
- We should eagerly long for His return (Titus 2:12-13)
- We do not know when he will return (Mark 13:32-37)

### **Other Significant Scriptures:**

<sup>3</sup> *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” –Revelation 21: 3-4*

<sup>42</sup> *“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” –1 Corinthians 15:42-44*

<sup>4</sup> *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” –Revelation 20:4-6*