

# Now What?





# CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

## WELCOME TO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about THE BRIDGE! This orientation is the basic introduction to our church family. Since we have members from many different church backgrounds, this session was designed to clearly explain who and what our church is.

*"Now What?" - Church Membership* is divided into four sessions:

1. Our Strategy
2. Our Structure
3. Our Statements
4. Our Salvation

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### THE BASICS

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*"...You are a member of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian."* Eph. 2:19 (LB)

#### *Key Truths:*

1. The church is **a family**
2. God expects you to be **a member** of a church family.
3. A Christian without a church family is **an orphan**

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### THE GOAL

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*...I will commit myself to Christ and to His church family*

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### WHAT MAKES THE BRIDGE A FAMILY?

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#### Four things unite us:

- **Our Salvation** (What God has done for us)
- **Our Statement** (Why we exist as a church)
- **Our Strategy** (How we fulfill our purpose)
- **Our Structure** (When and where we fulfill our purpose)

# Session One

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## THE BRIDGE Strategy

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*“I (Paul) have been all things to all sorts of people that by every possible means I might win some to God. I do all of this for the sake of the Good News.”*

1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (Ph)

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## WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

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Answer: **EVERY unsaved soul within our spheres of influence!**

*"...Yes, whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him."* 1 Cor. 9:22 (LB)

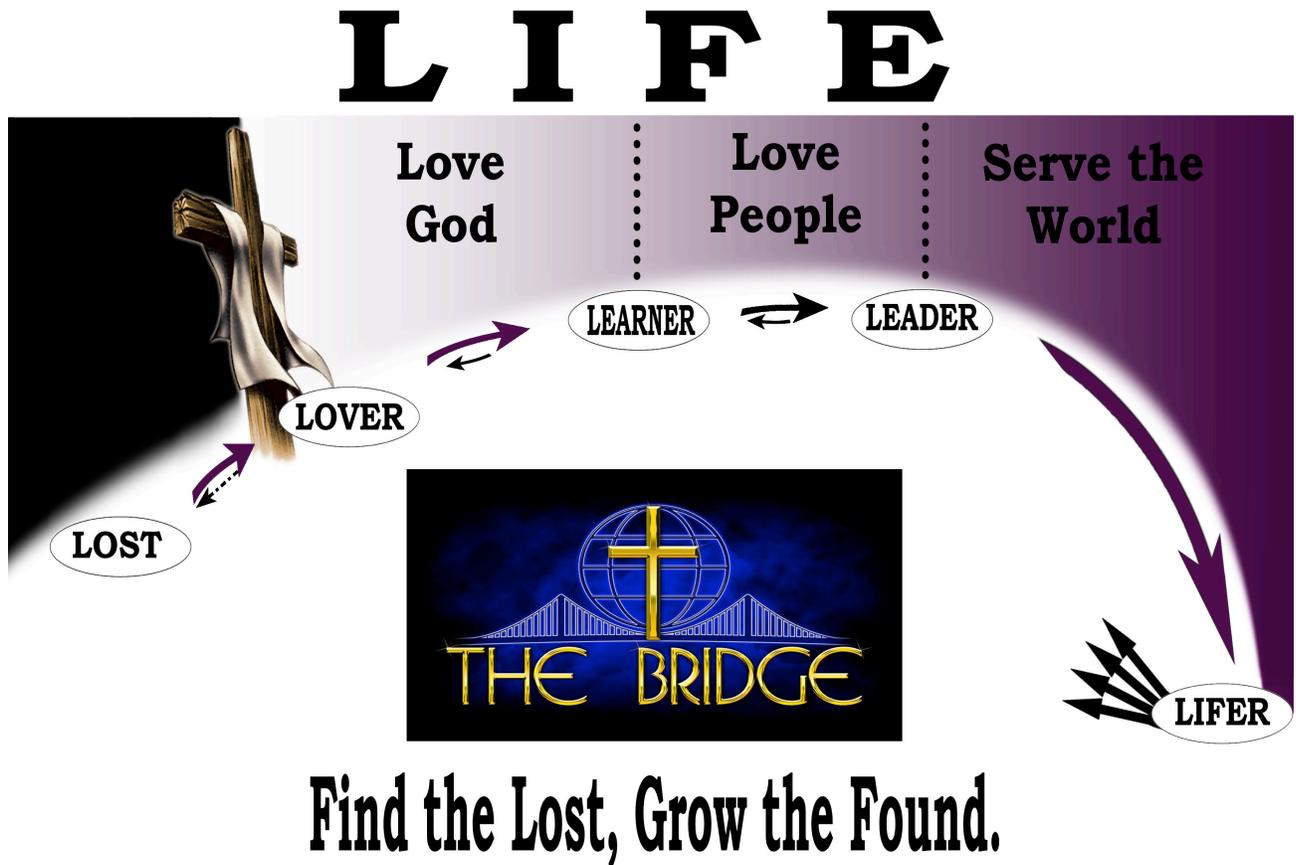
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## THE BRIDGE "LIFE CYCLE" OF COMMITMENT & GROWTH

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*THE BRIDGE's objective is to glorify God, in part, by helping people "live on-mission," committing to "maturing horizontally" toward Christ-likeness. Specifically, we call, encourage, and equip people to four basic, spiritual commitments:*

## THE FOUR BRIDGE COVENANTS:

### 1. THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT...

is a commitment to Christ and the church family

*“You are members of God’s very own family...and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.” Eph. 2:19 (LB)*

*“We are all parts of Christ’s Body, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other and need all the others.” Rom. 12:4-5 (LB)*

### 2. THE MATURITY COVENANT...

is a commitment to the habits necessary for spiritual growth?

*“Continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18*

*“Take the time and trouble to keep yourself spiritually fit.” 1 Tim. 4:7 (Ph)*

### 3. THE MINISTRY COVENANT...

is a commitment to discovering and using my God-given gifts and abilities in servicing God and others.

*“God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other...” 1 Pet. 4:10 (LB)*

*“There are different kinds of service to God...together you form the Body of Christ and each one of you is a necessary part of it.” 1 Cor. 12:5,27 (LB)*

### 4. THE MISSIONS COVENANT...

a commitment to share the Gospel with others & making disciples who make disciples who make disciples

*“...you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (GN)*

*“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect...” 1 Peter 3:15*

## WHY DO WE HAVE THESE COVENANTS?

**BECAUSE WE BECOME WHAT WE ARE committed to.**

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**T.H.E. B.R.I.D.G.E. STRATEGY**  
*9 Principles That Make Our Church Unique*

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**T**\_\_\_\_\_ (Truth in love)\_\_\_\_\_ (John 14:6 & Eph. 4:14-16)

**H**\_\_\_\_\_ (Holy sacrifices)\_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 12:1-2)

**E**\_\_\_\_\_ (Encouraging)\_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 10:24-25)

**B**\_\_\_\_\_ (“BE-ing”/Becoming)\_\_\_\_\_ (1 Cor. 9:22-23)

**R**\_\_\_\_\_ (Real-Deal)\_\_\_\_\_ (1 John 3:18)

**I**\_\_\_\_\_ (If)\_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 10:9)

**D**\_\_\_\_\_ (Doers)\_\_\_\_\_ (Colossians 4:5)

**G**\_\_\_\_\_ (“Greats”)\_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 22:37-40; 28:19)

**E**\_\_\_\_\_ (EVERYWHERE!)\_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 1:8)

# Session Two

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## THE BRIDGE Structure

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*“For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace...  
Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”*

1 Cor. 14:33,40

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## HOW OUR CHURCH IS STRUCTURED

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The structure of the church should *not* be determined by culture, business practices, or even denominational traditions.

### THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH DETERMINES ITS STRUCTURE.

#### I. THE CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP

*“They continued steadily learning the teaching of the apostles, and joined in the fellowship...”* Acts 2:42

**A top priority in a fellowship is UNITY and HARMONY**

*“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* Eph. 4:3

*“So let us concentrate on the things that make for harmony and the growth of our fellowship together.”*  
Rom. 14:19 (Ph)

#### ANY attitude that causes disunity is sin.

Col. 3:15, 1 Cor. 1:10, 2 Tim. 2:14, Pr. 17:14, 2 Cor. 13:11,  
Phil. 1:27, 2:1-3, Col. 2:2, Phil. 4:2, 1 Peter 3:8, 1 Cor. 14:33,  
John 13:34-35, 2 Tim. 2:23, Rom. 15:5-6, Rom. 12:16-18, Col. 3:13-14, Ps. 133:1

**IMPLICATION: A GOOD STRUCTURE PROMOTES UNITY AND DOWNPLAYS DIFFERENCES.**

*“(Often)...your meetings do more harm than good because I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you...”* 1 Cor. 11:17-18

“Voting” tends to create conflicts

**At THE BRIDGE, we only vote on:**

- Annual budget, confirmation of Elders and legal Trustees
- Purchase of land or buildings
- Call of the Lead Pastor
- Changes in the church constitution

#### II. THE CHURCH IS A FAMILY

*“You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.”* 1 Peter 3:8 (LB) see also... Gal. 6:10, Heb. 2:10-12, 1 Peter 4:17

**SO WE OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF RELATIONSHIPS NOT RULES**

*“Don’t reprimand a senior member of the church, appeal to him as a **father**. Treat the young men as **brothers**, and the older women as **mothers**. Treat the younger women as **sisters**...”* 1 Tim. 5:1-2 (Ph)

*“(A Pastor) must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to **manage his family**, how can he **take care of God’s church**?”* 1 Tim. 3:4-5

### III. THE CHURCH IS A BODY

1 Cor. 12:27, Eph. 5:23, Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18, 2:19

We are a body — not a business!

We are an organism — not an organization!

**THEREFORE, WE FUNCTION ON THE BASIS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS NOT ELECTED OFFICES**

*“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We each have **different gifts** according to the grace given us.” Rom. 12:4-6*

**In an organization, “maintenance” becomes the focus. In an organism, “ministry” *is* the focus.**

AT THE BRIDGE WE HAVE A SIMPLE STRUCTURE SO WE CAN MAXIMIZE MINISTRY AND MINIMIZE MAINTANENCE

*“God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to **equip** God’s people for **works of ministry**, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Eph. 4:11-12*

### OUR STRUCTURE

- THE PEOPLE ARE THE “MINISTERS”
- THE PASTORS ARE THE “EQUIPPERS”

### IV. THE CHURCH IS A FLOCK

(Jesus’ favorite description of the church)... see John 10:1-30, Matt. 26:31, Matt. 25:33

**THEREFORE, IT IS CARED FOR AND LED BY SHEPHERDS.**

*“Jesus asked Simon Peter, ‘Do you really love me?’ ‘Yes Lord,’ said Peter. ‘Then **feed/take care** of my sheep.’” John 21:16-17*

Three different terms are used in the New Testament to refer to the *same* church leaders:

- “*POIMEN*”
- “*PRESBUTEROS*”
- “*EPISCOPOS*”

*“To the **elders** I say...**Be shepherds** of God’s flock, serving as **overseers**...” 1 Pet. 5:1-2*

*“Paul sent to Ephesus for the **elders** of the church. When they arrived he said to them... Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. **Be pastors** of the church of God...” Acts 20:17-18, 28... see also Titus 1:5-7, 1 Timothy 5:17*

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## OUR AFFILIATION

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When THE BRIDGE began, 6 groups gave our church financial support to help us get started:

- ***The Arundel Baptist Association***  
Southern Baptist churches that fellowship together and work together to reach the greater Anne Arundel County, plus Kent Island and its surrounding communities.
  
- ***The Maryland/Delaware Baptist Convention (BCMD)***  
Southern Baptist churches that fellowship together with the goal of evangelizing our two neighboring states.
  
- ***The Southern Baptist Convention***  
40,000 churches that cooperate in a worldwide effort of missions thru the “Cooperative Program”
  
- ***Weems Creek Baptist Church***  
Weems Creek is our Annapolis-based, “parent church.” The saints of WCBC prayed our church into existence. God laid a burden and vision on their hearts to plant a contemporary church on Kent Island. The Missions & Prayer Ministries of WCBC held fast to what they knew God had called them to... They prayed for over 3 years and considered more than 50 candidates before “calling” the Pearson family as Missionary Church Planters to Kent Island. WCBC gave sacrificially so as to under-gird the birthing of our church.
  
- \* ***Graceland Baptist Church***  
Graceland is the Pearson family’s “home” church, also known as the “sending” church. Pastor Jeff was ordained at Graceland, which is located in New Albany, Indiana, near The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Graceland sent the Pearsons to Kent Island with love, prayers, and additional financial support.
  
- \* ***Individual Support***  
Even with the financial contributors noted above, Kent Island’s high property values and overall cost of living created very real challenges to the start of THE BRIDGE... Providentially, God provided the balance of funds needed through the generous giving of a Pearson family member – Praise the Lord!

These six groups collectively gave our church over \$100,000 in each of our first two years and approximately \$75,000 in year three.... all in support of what is today THE BRIDGE... no strings attached!

We now wholeheartedly support the Southern Baptist Convention in helping start many *other* new churches.

## WHAT IS THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION?

- *It is the **largest** association of Christian churches in America*  
One out of every 10 churches in America is affiliated with the SBC (40,000 churches and 15 million members — more than most other denominations combined).
- *It is the **most** diverse association of churches*  
SBC churches include every race, nationality, and ethnic group. Each Sunday, services are held in over 80 languages in the U.S. One out of every three African Americans in the U.S. is a Southern Baptist. Our associations includes Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Laotian, Black, Arabic, and Romanian Southern Baptist churches – just to name a few.
- *It is one of the **fastest** growing groups*  
The SBC baptizes over **1,000 new Christians a day** in the U.S. and begins nearly **5 new churches a day!**

## WHY NOT JUST BE AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH?

We *are* an independent church! Every SBC church is completely independent. There is no denominational control or hierarchy, as there are in most other denominations. Each church is self-governed and determines its own affairs.

For example:

- *Every SBC church chooses its own pastor*
- *Every SBC church owns its own assets*
- *Every SBC church determines its own programs*

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF AFFILIATING WITH THE SBC?

1. It allows us to **identify with other Christians** around the world who are known for their commitment to the Bible. Unlike other groups, the SBC has no man-made “creed”. **The Bible is our only authority.**
2. It allows our church to **participate in the largest missionary organization in the world.** Through the SBC “Cooperative Program” we help support over 10,000 missionaries in 104 countries around the world.

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## WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MEMBER

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The difference between “*attenders*” and “*members*” can be summed up in one word: **COMMITMENT!**

**At THE BRIDGE, we recognize the need for a formal membership. We ask you to commit to membership for four reasons:**

**I. A BIBLICAL REASON:  
CHRIST IS COMMITTED TO THE CHURCH**

“...*Christ loved the church, and he gave his life for it.*” Eph. 5:25

**II. A CULTURAL REASON:  
IT IS AN ANTIDOTE TO OUR SOCIETY**

We live in an age where very few want to be committed to anything...a job...a marriage...our country. This attitude has even produced a generation of “church shoppers and hoppers”. Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.” It is an unselfish decision. Commitment always builds character.

**III. A PRACTICAL REASON:  
IT DEFINES WHO CAN BE COUNTED ON**

Every team must have a roster. Every school must have an enrollment. Every business has a payroll. Every army has an enlistment. Even our country takes a census and requires voter registration. Membership identifies our family.

**IV. A PERSONAL REASON:  
IT PRODUCES SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

The New Testament places a major emphasis on the need for Christians to be accountable to each other for spiritual growth. You cannot be accountable when you’re not committed to any specific church family.

### WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A MEMBER?

At THE BRIDGE, we never ask our members to do or “BE” more than the Bible clearly teaches. We only expect our members to do and “BE” what the Bible expects every Christian to do and “BE.” These privileges & responsibilities are laid out below: shared first through inspiration and vision, then subsequently spelled out in the BRIDGE Membership Covenant which follows.



On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. left an indelible heart-print on the window of human history. He did so by simultaneously casting and defending a vision that was founded upon divinely inspired freedom. Dr. King's eloquence and passion stirred the soul of a nation when he delivered his famous, "I Have A Dream" speech.

Today, we too have a divinely inspired vision that is rooted in faith and enveloped by biblical *"truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:14-16). Like Dr. King, we will share our vision in parallel expressions of optimism and high-calling. We will be a church that serves the world, from our neighbors to the nations, as a BRIDGE, intentionally connecting Christ's "real-deal" to everyday living. Therein, **we are committed to BE-ing an Acts 1:8 church:** *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

## **We Will "BE" His Witnesses**

**We will be a church within which everyone feels welcome.**

- \* Within which sinners sit beside saints & feel no condemnation, but rather Christ's love
- \* Within which one's social standing, race, or other demographics simply do not matter

**We will be a church that celebrates the presence of God.**

- \* Within which people not only feel His presence, but encounter Him in life-changing ways
- \* Within which worship is not a Sunday morning "form," but an all-the-time lifestyle

**We will be a church that is committed to prayer.**

- \* Not as part of an order of service or as some sort of religious "duty" but as a spiritual lifeline for daily living
- \* Within which fervent, intercessory prayer is consistently lifted individually & corporately
- \* Within which the week's highlight is often an intimate time of prayer

**We will be a church that is Spirit led with biblical authority & refining truth** (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

**We will be a church that has the world at heart.**

- \* Within which committed lives “*on-mission*” will replace mere, *moralistic good deeds*.
- \* Within which people are passionate about taking the gospel to all the world... so passionate that they feel compelled to get involved in the process personally - via heartfelt prayer, sacrificial giving, and hands-on participation... in local outreach efforts, as well as missions’ trips across North America and around the world.

**We will be a church where people can find true, biblical, Church-defining “community” including**

- \* Friends that last a lifetime
- \* Support and affirmation
- \* A family in which the unity of the Spirit is a priority *and* is zealously protected
- \* An atmosphere in which people out-do each other in being servants – not as some form of legalistic behavior, but because they are so deeply committed to living like Jesus

**We will be a church in which children feel loved & safe; young believers are built up; & every Christian is disciplined to make disciples, who make disciples... all by God’s grace & for His glory.**

**We will be a church that consistently reflects the love of God to our community.**

- \* A saved people who are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to share their faith
- \* Our aim is not to “*get in someone’s face*” but rather, to *touch someone’s heart*
- \* Within which people intentionally search for ways to serve those outside of the faith, as a practical demonstration of God’s love – with no strings attached!
- \* By double-fisted seed-sowers becoming comfortable working behind the spiritual plow
- \* A people within which new believers are warmly welcomed into the family of God *and* intentionally nurtured (a.k.a. “discipled”) in their new life in-Christ... as His Church.

**We will be a church that’s a little slice of heaven here on earth. *Miracle. Messiah. Mission.***

**We will be a church that honors and obeys the Word of God.**

- \* Within which biblical truth is presented in accurate, creative, and applicable ways
- \* Whose people live with a healthy fear of God and take faithful obedience seriously
- \* A church whose doctrine reflects the Truth of God’s fully inspired and perfect Word
- \* A people intentionally led through a process of spiritual growth that develops and deploys them as servants of the living God. A church in which all who “believe and receive,” embrace their “right-where-you-are” missionary-calling
- \* A church whose attitude is always, “*God said it. I believe it. That settles it.*”

**It is our prayer that you will catch & commit to this command & commission of Christ.**

*“Find the Lost, Grow the Found”*

(Matthew 28:18-20)

***Together, in-Christ, we will BE-the-Church!***

## **THE BRIDGE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

“Having **MIRACULOUSLY** received Jesus Christ, the One and only **MESSIAH**, as my personal Lord & Savior, in conjunction with my biblical baptism, and being in agreement with THE BRIDGE’s statements, strategy and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with this church family: on **MISSION**. In doing so, as a disciple committed to making disciples who will in turn make disciples, I commit myself to God & to the other members by “**BE-ing**” the following:

### **I. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By sharing “koinonia” (supernatural unity) & acting in love toward other members**
- ...By refusing to gossip**
- ...By following the leaders**

*“So let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony, and on the growth of our fellowship together.” Rom. 15:19 (Ph)*

*“Live in complete harmony with each other — each with the attitude of Christ toward each other.” Rom 15:5 (LB)*

*“Have a sincere love for your fellow believers, love one another earnestly with all your hearts.” 1 Peter 1:22 (GN)*

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...” Eph. 4:29*

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be no advantage to you.” Heb. 13:17*

### **II. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By praying for its growth**
- ...By witnessing for Christ and inviting the unchurched to attend**
- ...By warmly welcoming all who visit & helping them become fully devoted followers/disciples**

*“To the church...we always thank God for you and pray for you constantly.” 1 Thess. 1:2*

*“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.” Luke 14:23 (LB)*

*“So, warmly welcome each other into the church, just as Christ has warmly welcomed you; then God will be glorified.” Rom. 15:7 (LB)*

### **III. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By discovering my gifts and talents**
- ...By being equipped to serve by my church leaders**
- ...By developing and applying a servant's heart**

*"Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you..." 1 Peter 4:10 (Ph)*

*"God gave...some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." Eph. 4:11-12*

*"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ...who took on the very nature of a servant..." Phil 2:3-4, 7*

### **IV. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH**

- ...By attending faithfully**
- ...By living a godly life**
- ...By stewarding biblically.**

*"Let us not give up the habit of meeting together...but let us encourage one another." Heb. 10:25*

*"But whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the gospel of Christ." Phil. 1:27 (Ph)*

*"Each one of you, on the first day of each week, should set aside a specific sum of money in proportion to what you have earned and use it for the offering." 1 Cor. 16:2*

*"A tenth of all you produce is the Lord's, and it is holy." Lev. 27:3*

# Session Three

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## THE BRIDGE Statements

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*“Let there be real harmony among you so there won’t be any split in the church.  
I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose.”*

1 Corinthians 1:10 (LB)

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**OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT**  
*Why We Exist As A Church*

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The mission/purpose of our church is summarized in a single phrase based on two key scriptures:

**BRIDGE MISSION STATEMENT: “LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE, SERVE THE WORLD.”**

**The Great Commandments:** “Jesus said, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart...soul...and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments.’” Matt. 22:36-40

**The Great Commission:** “Jesus said, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matt. 28:19-20

**VISION STATEMENT: “FIND THE LOST, GROW THE FOUND”**

- To “Love God with all your heart” is **“WORSHIP”**.
- To “Love your neighbor as yourself” is **“MINISTRY”**.
- To “Go...make disciples” is **“EVANGELISM”**.
- To “Baptize...” is to **“INCORPORATE INTO FELLOWSHIP”**.
- To “Teach them to obey...all things” is **“DISCIPLESHIP”**.
- \* To “Obey everything...” includes **“PRAYER”**

**THE BRIDGE EXISTS:**

- 1..... **To PRAY**
- 2..... **To SERVE**
- 3..... **To WORSHIP**
- 4..... **For OUTREACH**
- 5..... **For RELATIONSHIPS**
- 6..... **To DEVELOP DISCIPLES**

**We use the following acronym for the church’s purposes: P. S.W.O.R.D. (Prayer SWORD)**

## I. WE EXIST TO CELEBRATE GOD'S PRESENCE

### WORSHIP: EXPRESSES LOVE TO GOD

*"Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only."* Matt. 4:10

*"...The Father seeks worshipers...and His worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth."* Jn 4:23-24

#### Expressions of Worship

- **Singing** (Eph. 5:19)
- **Commitment** (Romans 12:1-2)
- **Praying** (Ps. 95:6)
- **Hearing the Word** (John 17:17)
- **Giving** (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- **Baptism** (Romans 6:3-4)
- **Meditating** (Hab. 2:20)
- **Lord's Supper** (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

#### THE BRIDGE Worship Style

**"Celebration"**  
Psalm 122:1

**"Inspiration"**  
Isaiah 40:31

**"Preparation"**  
Eph. 4:11-12

## II. WE EXIST TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD WITH GOD'S WORD

*"His intent was that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known..."* Eph. 3:10

*"Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But who can ask Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells him?"* Rom. 10:13-14 (LB)

### WHY OUR CHURCH MUST NEVER STOP GROWING

#### 1. Because God loves people

*"The Lord...is patient, **not wanting anyone to perish**, but wants everyone to come to repentance."*  
- 2 Pet. 3:9

2 Cor. 5:14, Luke 15:3-10, Matt. 9:12-13

## 2. Because God commands us to reach out

*“Go out into the country...and urge anyone you find to come in, so that My House will be full.”* Luke 14:23

*“...you will be my witnesses...”* Acts 1:8

## 3. Because growth is God’s will

*“Under Christ’s control, the whole Body is nourished...and grows as **God wants it to grow.**”* Col. 2:19

*“(Jesus) I will build my church.”* Matt. 16:18

### Unbiblical Excuses For Not Growing:

- *“God isn’t interested in numbers.”*
- *“Our church wants quality not quantity.”*
- *“Large churches are impersonal”*

**We believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time.**

*“And the Good News of the Kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and **THEN** the end will come.”* Matt. 24:14

## III. WE EXIST TO GLORIFY GOD, IN PART, BY GROWING GOD’S PEOPLE

### **DEVELOPING DISCIPLES: BELIEVERS GROWING SPIRITUALLY**

*“Let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ **and go on to maturity...**”* Heb. 6:1

*“Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* 2 Peter 3:18

*“(God has given)...some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of ministry, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all...become mature...like Christ.”* Eph. 4:11-13

## IV. WE EXIST TO SHARE GOD’S LOVE

### **MINISTRY: MEETING NEEDS WITH TRUTH IN LOVE**

*“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples — **that you have love for one another.**”* John 13:35

1 John 3:16-17, Matt. 25:34-40, Heb. 13:16, Rom. 12:13

The heartbeat of THE BRIDGE is our **LIFE Groups** Every member needs to be a part of one.

*“Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities... and there are different kinds of service to God (ministry)... All of you together form the one Body of Christ and **each of you is a separate and necessary part of it.**” 1 Cor. 12:4-5, 27*

**At THE BRIDGE...**

- Every member is a: MINISTER
- Every task is: IMPORTANT
- Every member is NEEDED in: SOME AREA

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## OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH

### *What We Believe*

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• **In essential beliefs — we have unity.**

*“There is one Body and one Spirit...there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all...” Eph. 4:4-6*

• **In non-essential beliefs — we have liberty.**

*“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God.” Romans 14:1,4,12,22*

• **In all our beliefs — we show charity.**

*“...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have **no love**, I amount to nothing at all.” 1 Cor. 13:2 (Ph)*

### THE ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE:

#### 1. ABOUT GOD

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three personalities: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and are one God.

Genesis 1:1,26,27, 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14

#### 2. ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven’s glory and will return again someday to earth to reign as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-5; 14:10-30;

Hebrews 4:14,15; 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Romans 1:3,4; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:14,15; Titus 2:13

### **3. ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son of God. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. He provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. He gives every believer a spiritual gift when they are saved. As Christians, we seek to live under His control daily.

2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7-13, 14:16,17; Acts 1:8;  
1 Corinthians 2:12, 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18

### **4. ABOUT THE BIBLE**

The Bible is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. Because it is inspired by God, it is the truth without any mixture of error.

2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20,21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105,160, 12:6; Proverbs 30:5

### **5. ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS**

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called "sin". This attitude separates people from God and causes many problems in life.

Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2

### **6. ABOUT SALVATION**

Salvation is God's free gift to us but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from a self-ruled life & turn to Jesus (as LORD & Savior) in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins miraculously the moment one believes & receives Jesus Christ by faith.

Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 14:6, 1:12; Titus 3:5;

### **7. ABOUT ETERNAL SECURITY**

Because God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ, the true believer is secure in that salvation for eternity. If you have been genuinely saved, you cannot "lose" it. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian. It is the grace and keeping power of God that gives us this security.

John 10:29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25, 10:10,14; 1 Peter 1:3-5

## 8. ABOUT ETERNITY

People were created to exist forever. We will either exist eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is Hell. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence.

John 3:16; John 14:17; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17-18; Revelation 20:15; 1 Cor. 2:7-9

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## OUR LIFESTYLE STATEMENT

### *What We Practice*

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Beliefs are not worth much unless they are translated into actions. Based on what the Bible teaches, we feel very strongly about the following seven practices:

### BIBLE AS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY

***“The whole Bible was given to us by inspiration from God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives; it straightens us out and helps us to do what is right.”*** 2 Tim. 3:15

Since God’s Word is the only completely reliable and truthful authority, we accept the Bible as our manual for living. Our first question when faced with a decision is “What does the Bible say?” We practice daily Bible reading, Bible study, and Bible memorization. The Bible is the basis for all we believe.

### AUTONOMY OF EACH LOCAL CHURCH

***“Christ is the head of His Body, the church. He is the source of the Body’s life...”*** Col. 1:18 (GN)

Christ is the recognized head of our church, not any person, group, or religious organization. While recognizing the value of associating and cooperating with other groups of Christians, we believe every local church should be self-governing and independent from any denominational control.

### PRIESTHOOD OF EVERY BELIEVER

***“Christ loves us, and by His death He has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve God...”*** Rev. 1:6 (GN) ***“You are...the King’s priests...God’s own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God.”*** 1 Pet. 2:9 (GN)

The Bible teaches that every Christian is called to “full time” Christian service, regardless of his or her vocation. We practice the truth that every believer is a minister by encouraging every member to find a place of service and ministry. Every believer has direct access to God through prayer and Bible reading.

## TITHING

***“A tithe of everything you produce belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.”*** Lev. 26:30

At THE BRIDGE we practice tithing for the support of Christ’s body, the church, as God commands. We recognize that giving 10% of our income is the biblical “starting point” for joyful, heart-felt giving.

Read Matthew 23:23 to see Jesus personally endorse the New Testament continuation of tithing.

## IMMERSION BAPTISM

***“For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ...”*** Col. 2:12 (GN)

We practice baptism by immersion — the way Jesus was baptized, and the way the Bible commands.

## SPIRIT-LED LIVING

***(Jesus said), “I am the Vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing.”*** John 15:5

We believe the only way possible to live the Christian life is by God’s power within us. So we seek to practice a daily dependence on God’s Spirit to enable us to do what is right. (Phil. 2:13, Eph. 5:18)

## TELLING OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST

***“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”*** 1 Peter 3:15

**See: Matthew 28:16-20 & Acts 1:8... foundational verses for THE BRIDGE** (and all churches).

It is the responsibility of every Christian to share the Good News with those with whom God brings us into contact. We practice personal sharing of the gospel and inviting people to church.

# Session Four

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## Our Salvation

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*“For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same — we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ.”*

Galatians 3:26-28 (LB)

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## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

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Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing “*WHY?*” They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God’s purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person can ask is, “*What is the meaning of life?*”

Everyone wants to be happy. People try many ways:

...Some look for happiness by **acquiring possessions.**

...Some look for happiness by **experiencing pleasure.**

...Some look for happiness by **gaining prestige & power.**

But real happiness comes from understanding that **I exist to bring glory to God!**

### I. WHY AM I HERE?

#### 1. GOD MADE ME, TO LOVE ME!

God says, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love!*” Jer. 31:3

“*Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ...**because of His love.** God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children — this was God’s pleasure and purpose.*” Eph. 1:4-5 (GN)

#### 2. WE WERE CREATED TO ENJOY A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND TO MANAGE ALL OF THE REST OF GOD’S CREATION! THIS MAKES US SPECIAL!

“*So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said,...live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge.*” Gen. 1:27-28 (LB)

“*God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.*” 1 Tim. 6:17

Jesus said, “*I have come in order that you might have life — life in all its fullness!*” John 10:10

#### 3. WHEN WE KNOW AND LOVE GOD, AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES, IT PRODUCES TREMENDOUS BENEFITS IN OUR LIVES:

##### Clear Conscience

Rom. 8:1

##### Life & Peace

Rom. 8:6

##### Help with Weakness

Rom. 8:26

##### Purpose

Rom. 8:28

##### Confidence

Rom. 8:31

##### Security

Rom. 8:39

##### Power & Strength

Phil. 4:13

##### Fulfillment

Phil. 4:19

##### Freedom

John 8:32,36

## II. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Man has a natural desire to **be boss** and to ignore God's principles for living.

*"Look out for #1. Do your own thing."*

*"If it feels good, do it - regardless of what God says about it."*

*"It's my life and I'll do what I please!"*

**THE BIBLE CALLS THIS ATTITUDE: SIN**

*"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to his own way." Isaiah 53:6*

*"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth." 1 John 1:8*

**Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of His will.**

*"The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God." Isaiah 59:2 (LB)*

*"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal." Romans 3:23*

**When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives — marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.**

**WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS, THEY OFTEN TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING BEFORE TURNING TO GOD.**

*"There are ways that SEEM right to man, but they only end in death." Proverbs 16:25*

**Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him:**

- "My mother was a Christian so..."
- "It doesn't matter what you believe, just be sincere."
- "I'll give up all my bad habits."
- "I'll work real hard and earn it."
- "I'll be religious and go to church."

## III. WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Jesus Christ said, *"I AM THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except THROUGH ME!"* John 14:6

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is a Person!

## **JESUS HAS ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF YOUR SIN PROBLEM!**

*“The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. 6:23*

**God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him.**

*“God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.” Rom. 5:8*

*“God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.” 1 Tim. 2:5*

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

### **IV. WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?**

- 1. ADMIT THAT GOD HAS NOT BEEN FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS.**

*“If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.” 1 John 1:9*

- 2. BELIEVE THAT JESUS DIED TO PAY FOR YOUR SINS AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN ON EASTER, AND IS ALIVE TODAY.**

*“If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you **believe in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9*

*“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12*

- 3. ACCEPT GOD’S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. DON’T TRY TO EARN IT.**

*“For it is by grace you are saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift of God** — not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8,9*

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

- 4. INVITE JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND BE THE DIRECTOR (“LORD”) OF YOUR LIFE.**

*“To all who **receive** Him, He gives the right to become children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who **believe** this are reborn! — not a physical rebirth...but from the will of God!” John 1:12-13*

“Jesus says, ‘Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...’” Rev. 3:30

**YOU CAN ONLY TAKE THESE MIRACULOUS STEPS IF & WHEN GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT SUPERNATURALLY CHANGES & INDWELLS YOUR HEART. SALVATION’S GRACE-BASED MIRACLE TAKES PLACE IN DIVINE CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR GOD-GIVEN FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, (AS YOUR PERSONAL LORD & SAVIOR, AS WELL AS HUMANITY’S ONE AND ONLY MESSIAH), COUPLED WITH YOUR HEART-FELT, LIFE-CHANGING REMORSE & REPENTENCE OF SIN. 2 Corinthians 5:17,21 & Ephesians 2:8-10**

**TO THAT END, WE ENCOURAGE ALL PEOPLE TO PRAY & CRY OUT TO JESUS UNTIL THIS MIRACLE HAS TAKEN PLACE: Romans 10:13 (see a sample prayer below)**

“Dear Jesus, thank you for making me and loving me, even when I’ve ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. Please help me to understand it more. As much as I know how, I want to follow you from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. Please help me to grow now as a Christian.”

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

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### I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

#### 1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY JESUS

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.” Mark 1:9

#### 2. BECAUSE CHRIST COMMANDS IT.

“Jesus said, ‘Go to all people everywhere & **make them my disciples**, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit, & **teach them** to obey everything I have commanded you.’” Matt. 28:19-20

#### 3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A BIBLICAL BELIEVER

“...many of the people who heard Him **believed** and were **baptized**.” Acts 18:8

“We know that we have come to know Him, if we **obey** His commands.” 1 John 2:3

### II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

#### 1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

“Christ died for our sins... He was buried...and He rose again.” 1 Cor. 15:3-4

“For when you are **baptized**, you were **buried** with Christ, and in baptism you were also **raised** with Christ. Col. 2:12

## 2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY NEW LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN.

*“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!” 2 Cor. 5:17*

*“**By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life!**” Rom. 6:4*

Baptism doesn't make you a believer — it shows that **you already believe**. Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring — it's the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, **through faith**...it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9*

## III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

### BECAUSE JESUS WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

*“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.” Matthew 3:16*

### EVERY BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE WAS BY IMMERSION.

(Example) *“...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...” Acts 8:38-39*

### THE WORD “BAPTIZE” MEANS TO SUBMERGE OR PUT-UNDER WATER”.

The Greek word *baptizo* means, “to immerse or dip under water”.

### IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!

The founders of denominations agree:

**Martin Luther...**“I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”

**John Calvin...**“The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

**John Wesley...**“Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”

#### IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS BELIEVED IN CHRIST.

*“Those who believed and accepted His message were **baptized**...”* Acts 2:41

*“Simon himself **believed** and was **baptized**...”* Acts 8:13

*“But **when they believed** Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women.”* Acts 8:12

At THE BRIDGE, we wait until our children are old enough to **believe** and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a “*baptism of confirmation*” for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed. **This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible**, which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

**At THE BRIDGE, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized the way Jesus demonstrated, even though many of us were “confirmed” as children.**

#### V. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

**AS SOON AS YOU HAVE BELIEVED!**

*“Those who believed...were baptized...**that day!**”* Acts 2:41

*“Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, ‘Look, here is water! Why shouldn’t I be baptized right now?’ Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The man answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him.”* Acts 8:35-38

There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptized. If you wait until you are “perfect”, you’ll never feel “good enough”!

**CAN MY FAMILY BE BAPTIZED TOGETHER?**

Yes! If each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

**However**, it is important to remember that baptism is a *personal* statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays *your* obedience.

### WHAT SHOULD I WEAR WHEN I AM BAPTIZED?

Women should wear shorts and a modesty-minded top rather than a swimsuit. Men may wear shorts or a similar swimsuit along with a t-shirt. Bring a change of clothes and a plastic bag for your wet clothes.

### WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?

No... but you will be invited to share your confession of faith (a.k.a. why you are being baptized). We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.

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## THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

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Jesus never asked His disciples to remember His birth. But He did instruct them to remember His death and resurrection. He gave the church two visible symbols (called "*ordinances*") as reminders of His death. These two ordinances are: Baptism and The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an object lesson that represents a great spiritual truth for believers.

### I. WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER? (1 COR. 11:23-26)

#### 1. IT IS A SIMPLE ACT

*"The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, **took bread...**"* (vs. 23)

#### 2. IT IS A REMINDER

*"...and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; eat it **in remembrance** of me.'*" (vs. 24)

#### 3. IT IS A SYMBOL

*"In the same way, He took the cup, saying, '**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood; drink it to remember me.'"* (vs. 25)

#### 4. IT IS A STATEMENT OF FAITH

*"For whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death** until He comes back."* (vs. 26)

## II. WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Only those who are already **believers** (Mark 14:22-26)

*"For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment upon himself." 2 Cor. 11:29*

## III. HOW DO I PREPARE MYSELF FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER?

*"Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A person ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup." 1 Cor. 11:27-28*

By...

**1. Self-Examination**

1 Cor. 11:27

**2. Confessing My Sins**

1 John 1:9

**3. Recommitment**

Rom. 12:1

**4. Restoring Relationships**

Matt. 5:23-24

## IV. WHEN AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD WE OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Jesus never said when or how often believers should observe The Lord's Supper.



# Notes

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