

# Now What?





# CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

# VIDEO: “LIFE SAVING STATION”

## 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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### OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE 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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### WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

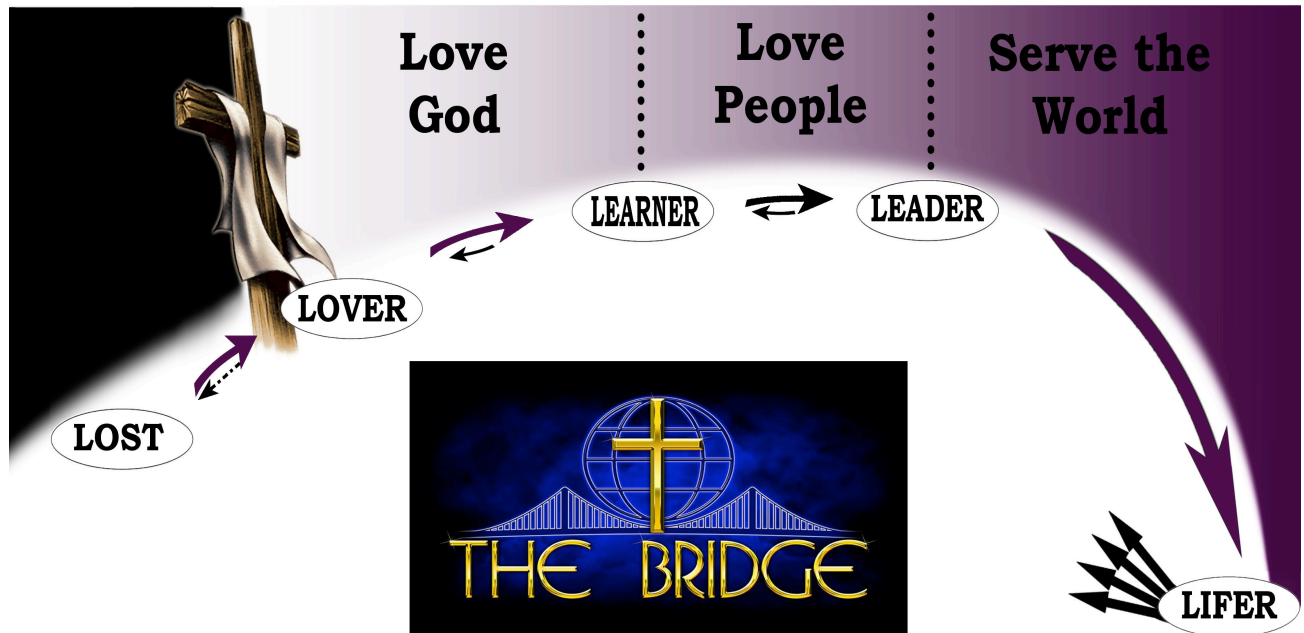
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**EVERY unsaved soul within our spheres of influence!**

*“...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)*

# L I F E



**Find the Lost, Grow the Found.**

*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:*

**VIDEO: “BRIDGE LIFE CYCLE”**

## THE FOUR BRIDGE COVENANTS:

### 1. THE MEMBERSHIP COVENANT...

is a commitment to Christ and the church family

*“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*

### 3. THE MINISTRY COVENANT...

is a commitment to discovering and using my God-given gifts & abilities in serving 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*

### 4. THE MISSIONS COVENANT...

a commitment to share the Gospel with others & making disciples...

*“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**

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

## VIDEO: “Your Sick”

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

(see MANY references)

**A GOOD STRUCTURE PROMOTES UNITY, 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)*

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

## **III. THE CHURCH IS A BODY**

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)

THEREFORE, IT IS CARED FOR AND LED BY SHEPHERDS.

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

## VIDEO: “Speak of the Devil”

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## OUR AFFILIATION

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

- ***The Arundel Baptist Association***
- ***The BCMD***
- ***The SBC***  
40,000 churches cooperate worldwide thru the “Cooperative Program”
- ***Weems Creek BC***
- \* ***Graceland BC***
- \* ***Individual Support***

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?

- ***Largest association of Christian churches in America***  
One out of every 10 churches in America is affiliated with the SBC
- ***It is the most diverse association of churches***  
SBC include every race, nationality, ethnic group... over 80 languages in U.S.

## 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.

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF SBC AFFILIATION?

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.**
  - **10,000+** missionaries around the world
  - **100+** 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!**

**THE BRIDGE recognizes the need for a formal membership.**

We ask you to commit to membership for **four (4) 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... This attitude has produced a generation of “church shoppers & hoppers”. Membership swims against the current of America’s “consumer religion.”

**III. A PRACTICAL REASON:**

*IT DEFINES WHO CAN BE COUNTED ON*

Every team must have a roster. Every army has an enlistment.  
**Membership identifies our family.**

**IV. A PERSONAL REASON:**

*IT PRODUCES SPIRITUAL GROWTH*

**VIDEO: “Real Church 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.**

**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”**

- \* 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” & 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*

*“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 & inviting the unchurched to attend
- ...By warmly welcoming all who visit... & helping them become fully devoted followers/disciples

## **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

*“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*

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# 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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### BRIDGE MISSION STATEMENT:

***“LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE, SERVE THE WORLD.”***

**The Great Commandments:** Matt. 22:36-40

**The Great Commission:** Matt. 28:18-20

### 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**”/Serving.*
- *To “Go...make disciples” is “**EVANGELISM**”/Outreach.*
- *To “Baptize...” is to “**Embrace in FELLOWSHIP**”/Relationships.*
- *To “Teach them to obey all things” is “**DISCIPLESHIP**”*
- \* *To “Obey everything...” includes “**PRAYER**”*

**THE BRIDGE EXISTS: P. S.W.O.R.D. (Prayer SWORD)**

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

### WORSHIP: EXPRESSES LOVE TO GOD

*“...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*

## **WHY OUR CHURCH MUST NEVER STOP GROWING**

**1. Because God loves people**

**2. Because God commands us to reach out**

Luke 14:23    Acts 1:8    Matthew 28:18-20

**3. Because growth is God’s will**

*“(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 & smaller at the same time.**

### III. WE EXIST TO GLORIFY GOD 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

### 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*

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 & 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.** Romans 14:1,4,12,22

- **In all our beliefs — we show charity.** 1 Cor. 13

## 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

## **VIDEO: “The Bible”**

### **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. 3:15-17

#### 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)

#### 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)

## VIDEO: “Big Buts”

## TITHING

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

Read Matthew 23:23 to see Jesus personally endorse tithing.

## IMMERSION BAPTISM

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

## 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).

## VIDEO: “Letter from Hell”

# 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?*”

## VIDEO: “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

#### 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!

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**

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

**When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives — 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:**

- “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?

**John 14:6**

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

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

**VIDEO: “What is the Gospel?”**

## 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*

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*

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.”

**VIDEO: “Personal (stick-man) Gospel”**

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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
2. BECAUSE CHRIST COMMANDS IT.
3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A BIBLICAL BELIEVER

*“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

*“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.

Baptism doesn’t make you a believer — it shows that **you already believe**.

### III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

BECAUSE JESUS WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

EVERY BAPTISM IN THE BIBLE WAS BY IMMERSION.

“BAPTIZE” MEANS TO SUBMERGE OR PUT-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 & accepted His message were **baptized**”* Acts 2:41

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

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

**WILL I HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING?**

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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

*“...do this in remembrance of me.” (vs. 24)*

#### 3. IT IS A SYMBOL

*“... ‘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)

### 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.

## VIDEO: “Where Are the Christians?”

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