

NEW MEMBERS CLASS

Foundations Project



James Island
Christian Church

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7
SESSION

Hearing & Doing

Hearing & Doing

SESSION 1

THE PARABLE OF THE BUILDERS

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a vivid metaphor in Matthew 7:24—27:

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock... And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand... and great was the fall of it.”

This passage presents two types of people—wise and foolish builders—who experience the same external conditions: both hear the Word, both build houses, and both face storms. The critical difference lies in their foundations. The wise build on the rock by obeying Jesus’ words; the foolish hear but do not act.

As with physical structures, storms in life (e.g., loss, illness, temptation, or relational strain) reveal the quality of one’s spiritual foundation. What appears secure from the outside may collapse if built on sand.

STORMS EXPOSE FOUNDATIONS

This truth is powerfully illustrated by the impact of Hurricane Hugo on Charleston in 1989. Well-constructed homes remained; others, built without proper structure, were destroyed. Similarly, storms in our lives reveal the true state of our faith. Examples include:

- **Physical illness or a bad medical diagnosis**
- **Challenges with children**
- **Financial hardship or job loss**
- **Infertility or relational strain**
- **Betrayal by friends**
- **Sexual temptation and cultural confusion**

Storms do not discriminate, but they do expose.

RESOURCES FOR BUILDING WELL: WORD, SPIRIT, AND PEOPLE

Believers today have the same resources available as the early church:

- **The Word of God** — the inspired, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient guide for faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:19–21).
- **The Spirit of God** — who illuminates Scripture, reveals the Father’s love, and empowers obedience.
- **The People of God** — who walk with us, teach, encourage, rebuke, and support.

This threefold support shapes a firm foundation that can withstand life’s storms.

THE WORD OF GOD: OUR STARTING PLACE

Jesus’ metaphor emphasizes doing the Word, not just hearing it. James reinforces this in James 1:22:

“Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

In today’s media-saturated age, believers are bombarded by conflicting messages. Paul’s exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2–4 warns against accumulating teachers who confirm our biases rather than preach truth.

The church, therefore, must be a place where the Word is taught clearly and consistently. It is why we:

- **Sit under regular biblical teaching**
- **Structure leadership (e.g., elders) biblically**
- **Uphold teachings on baptism, spiritual gifts, prophecy, and tongues through Scripture**
- **Begin our days with Scripture rather than social media**

THE SPIRIT OF GOD: OUR ILLUMINATOR AND EMPOWERER

The Holy Spirit is essential for understanding and applying God’s Word. The Spirit not only reveals truth but gives us courage to obey.

Prophetic words often play this role. They build up, encourage, and affirm. Obedience to God’s prompting leads to transformation and bold steps of faith.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD: OUR CO-BUILDERS

1 Corinthians 14:26 declares:

“When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation...Let all things be done for building up.”

The gathered church is a place for mutual edification. We build each other up through song, prophecy, teaching, support, and shared mission.

OBEDIENCE: THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WISDOM AND FOLLY

The core distinction in Jesus' metaphor is not in hearing but in doing. Jesus asks in Luke 6:46:

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

He describes the wise as one who "dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock." Foundation-building is often slow, unseen, and difficult, but it ensures stability when floods come.

PRACTICING THE WORD: 3 DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

To be doers of the Word, reflect on what you hear. Use these three questions in community:

1. **What is God saying to you?**
2. **What are you going to do about it?**
3. **How can I help?**

These questions help us turn revelation into action and build strong spiritual habits in community.

CONCLUSION: LAYING OR REBUILDING FOUNDATIONS

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:11:

"No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Whether you've walked with Jesus for decades or are still exploring, this season is an opportunity to dig deep, examine and strengthen your foundation, and re-center your life on Christ.

"The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew... but the house did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." (Matthew 7:25)

Let us be people who hear and do the Word, laying strong foundations with the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and the People of God.

EXPANDED FOUNDATION INSIGHTS

Laying strong foundations in our spiritual life often feels unrewarded in the moment. Foundations take time to build and are typically unseen. Just as with a physical structure, the deeper and stronger the foundation, the more resilient the building will be when storms inevitably come.

Luke 6:46—49 enhances the metaphor of the builders:

"Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them... is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock." Here, Jesus calls us not just to lay a foundation, but to "dig deep." True discipleship requires heart excavation — examining our motives, beliefs, and patterns, and replacing weak supports with truth from God's Word.

This is a lifelong process whether one is new to the faith or a mature believer. It requires repeatedly returning to the foundational truths of Christ, especially when storms have exposed instability.

WORD + SPIRIT + PEOPLE IN ACTION

The sermon provided vivid stories of how God's Word, Spirit, and People converge to establish strong foundations:

- **A couple receiving prophetic confirmation while fostering a drug-exposed newborn — reinforced by repeated imagery of a cocoon, signifying divine protection.**
- **A woman stepping out in trembling obedience to be baptized after years of delay — lovingly rebuked by a sister in Christ and supported by her family and church.**
- **The planting of Lighthouse North Charleston — affirmed through prophetic encouragements, strategic prayer, and community-wide confirmation.**

These examples illustrate that when we are saturated in the Word, attentive to the Spirit, and surrounded by God's people, we receive clarity and courage to act.

CULTURE AND FALSE TEACHING

The digital age has made a buffet of opinions and spiritual content easily accessible. Yet Paul's instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2—4 is sobering: people will gather teachers who suit their own desires and reject sound doctrine.

Like children left unsupervised at a buffet who load their plates with fries, believers must be trained to discern and choose truth over palatable lies. Sound doctrine, like healthy food, may not always be immediately appealing, but it nourishes and sustains.

This is why local church gatherings are essential — they provide accountability, clarity, and a spiritual diet rooted in Scripture.

Notes

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SESSION
2

The Gospel

The Gospel

SESSION 2

INTRODUCTION: THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

The gospel is not a myth or motivational slogan—it is news. Good news. News about a real man, Jesus of Nazareth, who lived, died, and rose again in a moment in history that changed everything (Romans 1:16). Whether skeptic or lifelong believer, we must root our understanding of the gospel in real history and the person of Christ.

The gospel liberates captives (Luke 4:18), confronts our brokenness, and invites us into the true story of God. To grasp this, we must learn to view the gospel through two lenses:

- **A wide-angle lens:** creation, fall, redemption, consummation.
- **A zoom lens:** God, man, Christ, response.

1. THE RULER — GOD THE CREATOR

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

God made everything good—light, land, animals, and humanity. He created male and female in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), to rule, reproduce, and represent Him—to reflect His goodness on earth.

Romans 1:20 affirms His eternal power and divine nature are evident in creation. We are not random. We are created with purpose, dignity, and responsibility: to worship, obey, and image God.

To know what is good, true, and beautiful, we must start with God.

2. THE REVOLT — SIN ENTERS THE STORY

Though made for God, we rebelled. Adam and Eve exchanged the truth for a lie (Genesis 3), seeking autonomy over trust. This revolt echoes in us today: “We want a kingdom without the King.”

Romans 3:23 — “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Ephesians 2:1-3 describes us as “dead in trespasses,” following the world, enslaved to desires, and under God’s wrath.

Sin is:

- **Hamartia** — missing the mark (Romans 3:23)
- **Paraptoma** — trespass (Romans 5:15)
- **Parakoe** — disobedience (Romans 5:19)

It is relational. Like adultery, it breaks covenant trust (Psalm 51:4; Isaiah 59:2).

It manifests in three ways:

- **Done by us:** pride, lying, selfishness.
- **Done to us:** betrayal, injustice, abuse.
- **Done around us:** corrupt systems and culture (e.g., greed).

This results in spiritual death and separation from God.

3. THE RESCUE — GOD’S GRACE IN CHRIST

Ephesians 2:4 — “But God, being rich in mercy... made us alive with Christ.”

The rescue centers on Jesus—His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection. His work is multifaceted:

- **Economic:** He paid our ransom (1 Peter 1:18-19)
- **Legal:** He canceled our debt (Colossians 2:14)
- **Relational:** He reconciled us to the Father (Romans 5:10)
- **Military:** He disarmed powers of darkness (Colossians 2:15)

John Stott summarizes: “The essence of sin is man substituting himself for God... the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man.”

Jesus’ death is not a mere example; it is substitutionary atonement.

Through Christ, we are transformed:

- **From death to life**
- **From guilt to innocence**
- **From shame to honor**
- **From fear to power**
- **From despair to hope**
- **From chaos to shalom (peace)**

This is not earned. It is grace.

4. THE RESPONSE — REPENT AND BELIEVE

Acts 2:38 — “Repent and be baptized... for the forgiveness of your sins.”

The gospel requires more than passive agreement. It demands a response:

- **Repent** — Turn from sin and self-rule.
- **Believe** — Trust in Jesus’ finished work.
- **Treasure** — Love and follow Him as Lord.

It’s not about praying a prayer or being moral. It’s about recognizing, “I’m lost. I’m dead. I need rescue.”

Jesus gets our sin. We get His righteousness.

This changes our identity and daily walk:

- **Confession, not hiding**
- **Worship, not striving**
- **Community, not isolation**

LIVING AND SHARING THE GOSPEL

The gospel shapes our present and future. It restores relationship with God, reforms how we live, and commissions us to proclaim and embody this good news.

Practical questions for discipleship:

1. **What is God saying to you?**
2. **What are you going to do about it?**
3. **How can I help you respond?**

We live this story together—hearing and doing the Word, empowered by the Spirit, surrounded by God’s people.

CONCLUSION: THE GOOD NEWS THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

The gospel is not about making bad people good or good people better. It’s about making dead people alive.

It is the power of God for salvation. Jesus is the Ruler we rejected, the Rescuer who redeems, and the Lord we now follow.

Let us be people who tell this story with clarity, conviction, and compassion—because it is the story that changes everything.

Notes

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3
SESSION

Being Born Again

Being Born Again

SESSION 3

INTRODUCTION: A CONVERSATION THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

John 3 introduces a powerful dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, a Pharisee and teacher of the law. Jesus tells him,

“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Using the metaphors of birth and wind, Jesus shifts the conversation from religion and rule-following to new spiritual life.

The imagery of birth is intentional and accessible. Just as physical birth is significant and unforgettable, so is spiritual rebirth. It signals an event where the spiritually dead are made alive by the work of God.

WHAT BEING BORN AGAIN IS NOT

Jesus’ teaching clarifies that being born again is not about external religious actions. It is not:

- Church membership or Christian family heritage
- Rituals such as christening or dedication
- Religious activity or serving in church roles
- Merely holding correct doctrine (James 2:19)
- Repeating a salvation prayer
- Joining a specific nation, tradition, or culture

As one pastor said, “Heaven is not for people who don’t want hell—it’s for people who love Jesus.” True rebirth produces love for Christ, not merely fear of judgment.

WHY MUST WE BE BORN AGAIN?

Our spiritual condition apart from the new birth is dire:

- **Dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-2)**
- **Children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)**
- **Lovers of darkness (John 3:19-20)**
- **Hard-hearted (Ezekiel 36:26)**
- **Unable to submit to or please God (Romans 8:7-8)**
- **Spiritually blind (John 3:3)**
- **Slaves to sin and Satan (Romans 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:24-26)**
- **Without ability to come to Christ or accept the gospel (John 6:44; 1 Cor 2:14)**

We don't just need spiritual improvement—we need a miracle. Being “Christianized” without transformation is tragically common. New birth is essential.

HOW ARE WE BORN AGAIN?

Spiritual rebirth is not achieved through formulas or manipulation. It's God's supernatural work:

- **We are made alive (Ephesians 2:4-5)**
- **Called out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9)**
- **Born through the Word (Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23)**
- **Born of water and Spirit (John 3:5)**

Jesus said,

“The wind blows where it wishes... so it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

We cannot control the Spirit's timing or method. Like babies or rescued captives, we do nothing to generate our new life.

Our part is repentance and belief—turning from sin and self, and trusting wholly in Jesus (Acts 2:38).

METAPHORS THAT HELP US SEE

Illustrations bring clarity. Just as children are born through the pain and sacrifice of another (their mother), we are spiritually reborn through the sacrifice of Christ. Like the boys trapped in the dark Thai cave in 2018, we too were hopelessly stuck in darkness until rescued.

John Newton captured this reality in “Amazing Grace”: “I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.” Born-again believers often describe spiritual awakening as seeing or hearing truth for the first time.

WHAT BEING BORN AGAIN PRODUCES

1. **Peace with God** — We are justified and reconciled (Romans 5:1).
2. **Adoption as Children** — We cry “Abba, Father” as beloved sons and daughters (Romans 8:15-17).
3. **Sanctification** — Our minds are renewed and our desires reordered (Romans 12:1-2).

Other signs of new birth include:

- **A hunger to worship and know God**
- **A lifestyle of repentance, not perfection**
- **Love-driven obedience, not legalistic effort**
- **Internal transformation, not just external conformity**

As Tim Keller wrote, Christianity is not self-renunciation or self-realization. It is self-transformation. You lose yourself to find yourself in Christ.

EXAMINING OURSELVES AND ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER

2 Corinthians 13:5 exhorts us:

“Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.” Philippians 2:12-13 adds that we should “work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you.”

New birth is a miracle. It’s not behavioral change—it’s resurrection. We replace lies with God’s truth, walk in repentance and faith, and live out our identity as children of God.

Three helpful discipleship questions:

- 1. What is God saying to you?**
- 2. What are you going to do about it?**
- 3. How can I help?**

Eternal life does not begin at death—it begins now. If you are born again, worship Him. If you’re not sure, seek, ask, and believe. God still gives new life today.

Notes

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SESSION
4

Water Baptism

Water Baptism

SESSION 4

INTRODUCTION: A COMMAND, A CELEBRATION, A LINE IN THE SAND

Water baptism is not a sentimental tradition or a symbolic rite—it’s a command of Jesus, a celebration of new life, and a public declaration of faith. In Acts 2:37–38, when the gospel cuts listeners “to the heart,” Peter’s response is clear: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Baptism follows spiritual regeneration—what Jesus called being “born again” (John 3:3). It marks our visible entry into the family of God. It is our line in the sand moment: “I belong to Jesus and no one else.”

WHAT IS BAPTISM?

Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18–20).

It symbolizes and declares:

- **Identification with Christ** — death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3–4)
- **Deliverance into new life** — like Israel through the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1–4; Exodus 14:28–29)
- **Circumcision of the heart** — the inward transformation of salvation (Colossians 2:11–15)

It is the church’s act of affirming a believer’s faith in Christ. Baptism portrays that the believer has died to sin, been buried with Christ, and raised to walk in newness of life.

WHY WE BAPTIZE BY IMMERSION

We baptize by immersion for three primary reasons:

1. **Jesus’ example** — He went into and came up from the water (Matthew 3:16–17).
2. **The meaning of the word** — The Greek word “baptizō” means “to immerse, submerge.”
3. **Biblical practice** — Examples like John 3:23 and Acts 8:36–38 describe baptisms requiring “much water” and going “down into the water.”

Immersion powerfully reflects the full metaphor of death, burial, and resurrection. It also visually saturates the whole body—showing that all of life is soaked in Christ.

WHAT BAPTISM DOES NOT DO

Baptism is not:

- **A means of salvation**
- **A guarantee of grace**
- **A rite of passage or membership**
- **Something done to please family or tradition**

We don't get baptized to receive forgiveness—we get baptized because we have already received it by grace through faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8–9). Baptism is a response of obedience to what Christ has already done.

WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

Baptism is for **believers** who have genuinely repented and placed faith in Jesus. It is not based on how articulate someone is but on the **object** of their faith.

In evaluating readiness—especially for children—we look for:

- **Conviction of sin**
- **Personal faith in Christ**
- **Desire to obey Jesus publicly, not just follow peers or please parents**

We're not saved by how much we understand, but by whom we trust.

WHY BAPTISM IS PUBLIC AND COMMUNAL

Jesus calls us not only to believe but to be baptized—and to do so **publicly**.

“Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” —Matthew 10:32

Baptism is never a private act. It publicly declares to the visible and spiritual realms (Ephesians 3:10) that we belong to Jesus.

The church plays a vital role: affirming the believer's profession and welcoming them into the family of God. That's why we practice baptism in community—with spiritual oversight and gathered witnesses.

OBEDIENCE BEFORE UNDERSTANDING

Jesus said, “Follow me.”

Baptism reminds us: we obey not because we understand everything fully, but because Jesus commands it. Revelation often follows obedience—not the other way around.

Just like a child obeys a parent's loving command, we trust Jesus when He says, "Be baptized." Faith steps lead to greater faith.

MORE THAN A SYMBOL: A NEW IDENTITY

Baptism marks our ****death to sin****, ****burial of the old life****, and ****resurrection into new life****. As Romans 6:4 says, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death... so that we too might walk in newness of life."

It's also our declaration to the world: "I am not of this world" (John 15:18–19). Baptism sets us apart. It's how we say to every power—seen and unseen—"I belong to Jesus."

Whether at a beach or a baptistry, baptism is a celebration of the gospel. As a church, we affirm each one who goes under the water and rises: "This one belongs to Jesus."

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENTS

If you've been baptized—remember with joy what God has done. Let gratitude renew your heart.

If you haven't—what's holding you back? If you've repented and believed, Jesus invites you to step into the water.

And for all of us: may we be the kind of church where wet footprints remind us of fresh beginnings, of heaven rejoicing, and of lives forever marked by grace.

Let's keep asking:

1. **What is God saying to you?**
2. **What are you going to do about it?**
3. **How can I help?**

BAPTISM - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How often do you schedule baptisms?

We schedule baptisms throughout the year as needed and can generally schedule them during any Sunday gathering. We also hold an annual beach baptism (usually in August). Your baptism journey can begin by completing the sign up form on our website.

Who should be a part of the baptism? Who is authorized to baptize?

Baptism is a church ordinance. Therefore, leadership should be present in some form — either elders or delegated leadership. Others such as parents, homegroup leaders, and friends can assist in leading the baptism. The details of who is leading various aspects of the baptism (such as asking the profession of faith questions or physically doing the immersing) can vary and be coordinated ahead of time by church leadership.

Can parents baptize their children or a spouse baptize their partner?

Yes. But practically, it is important to have church representation, both in the form of church leadership and the wider church family. One of the ways we do this is by an elder or church leader asking the person being baptized about their profession of faith. This ensures that what is being conveyed is not an individual and insulated family moment, but instead the church's affirmation of the individual's profession of faith in Christ.

How do I know if my child is ready to be baptized?

There is a natural tension that we live in as we discern how to answer this question. On one hand, baptism is meant to be for all who have put their faith in Christ. The prerequisite for this is faith and not maturity. This is true for a new believer at any age, thus we do not want to create extra Biblical requirements in order for the new believer to be obedient to Jesus in being baptized.

And on the other hand, we understand that children can easily be motivated by other factors such as desiring to please their parents, desiring to be like their siblings or friends, or just simply wanting to do what would bring them praise from their community.

With this in mind, one of the key elements for parents to look for is conviction of sin and personal repentance as these are outward signs of those who have put their faith in Christ. Parents should observe when their child actively shows a desire to make their life right with God by asking for and receiving forgiveness in various situations. Conviction of sin, repentance, and walking in faith and forgiveness is a good indicator that they have been born again and are ready to be baptized.

Do I have to be a member of the church to be baptized?

We have a membership process that includes classes and a personal conversation with an elder. This is not a prerequisite for baptism, but we do desire that a new believer take the important next steps of joining our church family. In cases where someone has made a profession of faith but is moving away and unable to continue to be a part of our church family, we will work closely with them to help them find a strong local church in the area where they are moving.

What about situations where there is not enough water for a full immersion?

In cases where there is not enough water for a full immersion, you should use whatever water is available to capture the spirit of the command.

What if there is not a church present in the area?

In cases where people come to faith in Jesus but there is no local church in that area (i.e. an unreached part of the world, a missionary who has just witnessed the first believer within a specific people group), it is acceptable for believers to baptize believers. The scriptural precedent for this is in Acts 8; however, this would be an exception and not the normal pattern outlined in the Scriptures.

If I participated in a “baptism or Christening ceremony” as a child/baby (without personal profession of faith in Jesus), does the church encourage me to be baptized by immersion as an adult?

Yes, we believe that the Scriptures command us to be baptized in water by immersion subsequent to our profession of faith in Christ.

We acknowledge the importance of raising our children in a covenant family and the traditions or denominations within the global Church that use baptismal ceremonies to convey this truth. It is our conviction that baptism is an act of obedience of the individual subsequent to their profession of faith, and therefore we would not consider a believer's baptism by immersion after an infant baptism/christening as a “rebaptism” but rather as their initial/first baptism.

Is baptism a pre-requisite for church membership?

Because baptism is not a prerequisite for entrance into Heaven, we likewise do not see it as a prerequisite for church membership. We have people that come from many church backgrounds and so we treat baptism just like other areas of discipleship and obedience: we teach, model, and encourage all members of the church to take steps of obedience in their faith, including baptism. We thank God that we have had many members of our church choose to be baptized by immersion after seeing this taught and modeled. This has been a very meaningful process for those who have taken that step.

Can I or should I get rebaptized?

This is a question that requires a conversation and pastoral discernment. But here are some brief thoughts:

Firstly, it's important to remember that baptism is meant to be for all who have put their faith in Christ. The prerequisite is faith and not maturity, time passed, or even obedience.

Sometimes, people have gone through an extended period of time of sinful behavior subsequent to their baptism and are desiring to renew their commitment to Christ. Other times, people grow in their faith and look back on a moment earlier in life and think "I didn't really know what I was doing" -- when in reality they were simply less mature in faith and life. In all these cases, we would still acknowledge your initial baptism and declaration of faith as genuine and would subsequently encourage you to share a public re-commitment of faith in Christ. As you recommit your life to Christ, we encourage you to cherish the glorious truth of the "perseverance of the saints."

Finally, after considering the above, if you have been previously baptized by immersion in water and are still certain that you were not born again subsequent to that, then we would encourage you to speak to a church leader about being baptized.

Notes

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SESSION
5

Growing in God

Growing in God

SESSION 5

INTRODUCTION: SYSTEMS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

“You do not rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.” — James Clear, **Atomic Habits**

Spiritual maturity is not achieved by willpower or lofty aspirations alone. As Paul writes in 1 Timothy 4:7–8, we are to “train ourselves for godliness.” This kind of training is formed through daily rhythms, rooted not in earning God’s love, but in seeing Him as supremely precious (Matt Smethurst).

Unlike the instant gratification culture around us, spiritual growth is slow, often hard, communal, and outside our control. It’s God’s work in us, but we cultivate space for it through the spiritual disciplines.

ROMANS 12: TRANSFORMED, NOT CONFORMED

Romans 12:1–2 (Phillips Translation):

“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you... do not let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within.”

The world seeks to mold us through comparison, performance, consumption, and fear. Spiritual transformation (*metamorphōō*) is a passive imperative—we are commanded to receive ongoing change as God transforms us from the inside out. Disciplines are the way we present ourselves to be formed by Him.

1. THE WORD OF GOD

Hebrews 4:12–13 says the Word is “living and active... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” We don’t just read Scripture—it reads us.

John 15:7 calls us to abide in Christ and let His words abide in us. Through hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, and speaking Scripture, we grasp the Word.

Donald Whitney: “To read the Bible and not to meditate is an unfruitful exercise.”

We prioritize the Word in personal devotion, family rhythms, and church teaching. Helpful tools include the Naviga-

tor's Hand (hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating) and digital resources like the Dwell app.

2. PRAYER

Matthew 6:9–13 teaches us to pray like Jesus. The Lord's Prayer provides a model: adoration, submission, petition, confession, and deliverance.

Prayer is about communion with God, not performance. We can use systems—journals, lists, Scripture-based prayers—to help us stay consistent.

Acts 6:4 — “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Praying Scripture is powerful: daily bread (v.11) reminds us to come to God for strength and provision every day.

3. WORSHIP THROUGH SONG

Worship is our spiritual act of devotion (Romans 12:1). It includes physical expressions:

- **Singing (Psalm 47:6)**
- **Shouting (Psalm 27:6)**
- **Bowing (Psalm 95:6)**
- **Standing in awe (Psalm 22:23)**
- **Dancing (Psalm 149:3)**
- **Playing instruments (Psalm 33:2–3)**
- **Clapping (Psalm 47:1)**
- **Lifting hands (Psalm 63:4)**

Worship unites the church and aligns our hearts with God's worthiness. Like corporate celebration at a football game, physical engagement amplifies joy and focus.

Worship is not based on emotion—it is a declaration of truth, often offered as a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15).

4. FASTING

Fasting, both from food and digital inputs, is a way of saying no to lesser comforts so we can feast on God.

Acts 13:2 shows fasting accompanying worship and divine direction.

Richard Foster: “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.”

John Piper: “The greatest enemy of hunger for God is not poison but apple pie... Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.”

We fast to focus, realign, and hunger for God's presence above all.

OTHER KEY DISCIPLINES AND APPLICATIONS

Additional practices that shape us include:

- **Sabbath** — rest and delight in God
- **Simplicity & Generosity** — resisting consumerism
- **Silence & Solitude** — withdrawing to listen
- **Celebration & Confession** — embracing joy and humility

John Mark Comer and Richard Foster highlight these in their writings as essential to spiritual formation.

We apply these disciplines:

- **Personally** — daily devotion and self-discipline
- **In our households** — forming family rhythms of faith
- **In community** — building a culture of practice and presence

CONCLUSION: TRANSFORMATION OVER TIME

Growth in God is not quick or glamorous. It's forged in repetition, hardship, and joy. God transforms us—not through striving—but as we present ourselves to Him through spiritual habits.

- **“What is God saying to you?”**
- **“What are you going to do about it?”**
- **“How can I help?”**

These questions guide us in turning revelation into transformation. Let's commit together to the slow, beautiful work of growing in God.

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SESSION 6

The Grace of God the Father

The Grace of God the Father

SESSION 6

INTRODUCTION: THE FATHER'S INITIATIVE

There's a reason videos of military fathers surprising their children go viral. We're moved not just by reunion, but by the fact that the father always initiates the embrace. In many of these moments, the child doesn't expect it—but the father has arranged it.

So too with salvation. God the Father initiates our return long before we realize we're lost. This is the consistent biblical narrative: from Eden to the cross, grace begins with God. He seeks us, not the other way around.

To truly know God is to know Him not only as Creator, but as Father. The most transformative revelation in the Christian faith is not that God exists—but that He is Father.

THE NATURE OF GRACE: CHESSED AND CHARIS

In the Hebrew scriptures, the word **chesed** appears repeatedly to describe God's covenant love—often translated as “loving kindness” or “steadfast love.” Exodus 34:6 names God as “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” Chesed is covenantal—rooted in who God is, not in who we are.

In the Greek New Testament, the word **charis** is used to express grace—God's unmerited favor. It's the word used in Ephesians 2:8–9:

“For by grace you have been saved through faith... it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Grace is not a divine shrug. It's costly love. It's not leniency—it's liberation, purchased at Christ's expense.

GRACE AND SOVEREIGNTY

God's grace is sovereign—it flows from His will and wisdom. Deuteronomy 7:7–9 explains why God chose Israel: not because they were numerous or righteous, but simply because “He loved them.”

This is vital: Grace is not a reward for the worthy but love for the unlovely.

Romans 9–11 echoes this: God’s mercy is given not based on human will or exertion, “but on God who has mercy.” The Father’s love is not reactive—it’s proactive. This eliminates boasting and centers salvation in divine love.

UNDERSTANDING THE LAW: SIX INSIGHTS

The law of God serves many functions, all of which prepare us for grace:

1. **The Law is good** — Psalm 19 calls it “perfect,” “reviving the soul.” It reflects God’s character.
2. **The Law is insufficient to save** — Hebrews 10:3–4: repeated sacrifices reminded of sin, not removed it.
3. **The Law reveals sin** — Like comparing a dingy undershirt to a new one, we see our flaws next to God’s holiness (Romans 3:20).
4. **The Law provokes sin** — Romans 7 explains how prohibition heightens desire. Forbidden fruit attracts.
5. **The Law was a guardian** — Galatians 3:24 calls it a tutor leading us to Christ.
6. **The Law is fulfilled in Christ** — Matthew 5:17. Jesus intensifies its meaning: not just actions, but intentions.

Grace is not a dismissal of the law—it is its fulfillment. Jesus did not lower the standard. He met it on our behalf.

THE TWO SONS AND THE WAITING FATHER

Luke 15:11–32 tells of a father with two sons.

Act I: The Younger Son

He demands his inheritance early, essentially saying, “I wish you were dead.” He breaks relationship, squanders wealth, and ends in disgrace. Yet, when he “comes to his senses” and rehearses a servant’s speech, his father ****runs**** to meet him. Middle Eastern patriarchs didn’t run. This act is undignified. But love compels the Father.

He embraces, clothes, and celebrates him—not as a servant, but as a son.

Act II: The Older Son

Angry and resentful, he refuses to celebrate. “I’ve served you all these years!” he protests. His error? He sees sonship as wages for labor. Like the Pharisees, he’s near but not intimate. The Father’s plea is tender: “All I have is yours.”

Both sons misunderstood grace. The younger tried to earn restoration; the older tried to deserve it.

God’s grace interrupts both: the self-indulgent and the self-righteous.

LEGALISM AND IDENTITY

Legalism is salvation by moral conformity—“I’m good, therefore I’m accepted.”

But grace dismantles this. It teaches that we are accepted, therefore we obey. Obedience becomes fruit, not currency.

Dallas Willard reminds us: “Grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning.” Earning says, “God owes me.” Grace says, “I owe Him everything—and yet it’s all gift.”

A.W. Tozer wrote: “Salvation is from our side a choice; from the divine side, it is a seizing upon... Our accepting and willing are reactions rather than actions.”

In grace, our belonging precedes our behavior. Identity shapes obedience—not the other way around.

GRACE IN THE CHURCH TODAY

In real life, grace looks like welcoming the broken. Like celebrating a new believer still smoking outside the church. Grace does not wait for polish—it moves toward people.

It's easy to raise “good kids” who become self-righteous adults—“little Pharisees.” But grace raises humble worshipers who know they need a Savior.

James 4:6: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Our communities must be marked not just by theological correctness but by an atmosphere of grace. We must resist exclusivity and celebrate mercy.

CONCLUSION: ENTER THE CELEBRATION

Jesus leaves the parable unresolved. The elder brother stands outside. We must decide: will we enter the feast of grace or hold onto our sense of entitlement?

The loudest refrain of that feast wouldn't be about the prodigal—it would be about the Father: “He ran to him. He forgave him. He clothed him.”

That's the gospel.

Let us be a people shaped by grace—quick to repent, quick to forgive, quick to celebrate every lost one found.

- **What is God saying to you?**
- **What are you going to do about it?**
- **How can I help?**

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7
SESSION

The Lordship of Christ

The Lordship of Christ

SESSION 7

INTRODUCTION: JESUS AS LORD, NOT JUST SAVIOR

To say “Jesus is Lord” is the defining confession of the Christian faith. It is both a cosmic reality and a personal declaration of allegiance. The Greek word for “Lord,” **kurios**, denotes absolute ownership and authority. When early Christians proclaimed “Jesus is Lord,” they were not making a safe spiritual statement—they were defying Caesar and risking their lives.

Romans 10:9 affirms:

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Lordship is not optional—it is essential.

Our culture often separates salvation from submission. But Scripture never allows that division. To receive Jesus as Savior is to follow Him as Lord. The gospel isn’t merely fire insurance—it’s a summons to discipleship and transformation.

THE FOUNDATION: LORDSHIP BEGINS WITH A MIRACLE

Spiritual surrender is not self-generated.

1 Corinthians 12:3 says,

“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit.”

The ability to call Jesus Lord with conviction is a gift—evidence of new birth.

The lordship of Christ is deeply personal. It means that every decision, desire, and domain of our lives is brought under His rule. In Luke 6:46, Jesus challenges: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

The Christian life is not about behavior management. It’s about a reoriented heart that responds to Jesus with love, trust, and obedience. The Holy Spirit enables this transformation as we walk with Him daily.

THREE ENEMIES OF SURRENDER: THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

1. **The Devil** — The father of lies (John 8:44), Satan is a deceiver who sows confusion and false teaching. His first attack in Genesis 3 was to question God's Word. Today, he continues to whisper half-truths to distort our understanding of God's character and authority.
2. **The Flesh** — The internal struggle against the Spirit. Galatians 5:17 says, "The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit." The flesh prioritizes autonomy, comfort, and immediate gratification. Feelings become truth, and desires define identity—yet Proverbs 28:26 warns, "Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool."
3. **The World** — Society's norms often oppose God's kingdom. 1 John 2:15 warns against loving "the world or the things in the world." Our digital age constantly disciplines us in self-expression, consumerism, and skepticism. Romans 12:2 urges us to resist being conformed and to be "transformed by the renewal of your mind."

COSTLY OBEDIENCE: A GLOBAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Around the world, confessing Jesus as Lord costs people everything. In countries like Iran, North Korea, and parts of India, baptism is seen as a political act—a renunciation of all previous loyalties. Many Christians are disowned, imprisoned, or worse.

Historically, the early church faced similar consequences. The simple phrase "Jesus is Lord" was a revolutionary and often dangerous declaration.

In the West, lordship is often resisted in subtler ways: prioritizing autonomy, resisting spiritual authority, and treating Jesus more as a consultant than a King. But the call is the same:

"Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me" (Luke 9:23).

LORDSHIP IN REAL LIFE: MONEY, SEX, AND POWER

These three areas often reveal our true loyalties:

1. **Money** — Jesus speaks more about money than heaven or hell. Why? Because money is a powerful idol. Matthew 6:24 says, "You cannot serve both God and money." Lordship in finances means budgeting around generosity, not luxury. It may mean refusing promotions that hinder spiritual community or kingdom service.
2. **Sex and Sexuality** — Our bodies are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Jesus' sexual ethic is radical in any culture. Following Him may mean choosing celibacy, ending cohabitation, or denying deeply rooted desires. True freedom is not the ability to do what we want—it's the power to do what we ought.
3. **Power** — Christian leadership is servant leadership. In Philippians 2, Jesus empties Himself and takes the form of a servant. In our homes, workplaces, and churches, we reflect His Lordship by laying down status and seeking the good of others.

SIGNS OF SURRENDER AND GROWTH

How do we know Christ is Lord over our lives?

- **Confession** — Are we honest about sin, or do we hide?
- **Community** — Do we submit to others, including spiritual leaders (Hebrews 13:17)?
- **Obedience** — Are we quick to follow God's Word even when it's hard?

- **Generosity** — Do we give freely or with hesitation?
- **Risk** — Do we step out in faith even when uncomfortable?

The Christian life is a long obedience in the same direction (Eugene Peterson). It's about daily submission, not occasional heroics.

HOPE IN THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Jesus is not a tyrant king—He is a good shepherd. His lordship leads to peace, purpose, and flourishing. In John 10:10 He says,

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

He is the Lord who wept (John 11:35), the Lord who washed feet (John 13), and the Lord who bore our sin (Isaiah 53). Submitting to Him is not loss—it's gain.

As Paul writes in Philippians 2:9–11, God "highly exalted Him... so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." That day is coming. Our joy is to bow now.

CONCLUSION: FROM CONFESSION TO LIFESTYLE

The Lordship of Christ is not a one-time declaration—it's a daily direction. Every morning, we recommit to follow, obey, and trust Jesus.

Let's walk together asking:

1. **What is God saying to you right now?**
2. **What will you do in response?**
3. **How can others walk with you?**

Lord, not my will, but Yours be done.

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SESSION
8

Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

Being Filled with the Holy Spirit

SESSION 8

INTRODUCTION: A RADICAL PROMISE

Jesus said something shocking in John 16:7:

"It is to your advantage that I go away."

To the disciples, who had lived every day with Jesus, this seemed incomprehensible. How could Jesus leaving be better than Him staying?

Jesus' answer:

"If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you."

He was promising the Holy Spirit—the presence of God—not just with, but within His people. This marks a dramatic shift in salvation history. We now live in the “age of the poured-out Spirit.” Since Pentecost, the Spirit is available to all who believe: men and women, young and old, rich and poor, regardless of status.

This promise is the foundation of a life lived in the Spirit: a life that is not only forgiven, but empowered, guided, and transformed.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WHAT DOES HE DO?

The Holy Spirit is not a power to be used—He is a person to be worshiped. The third person of the Trinity, He is “the Lord, the giver of life,” as the Nicene Creed declares. He is fully God—eternal, omniscient, present, and active.

Scripture describes Him as:

- **Helper** — (John 16:7): Our divine advocate.
- **Convicter of sin** — (John 16:8): Exposing what is wrong.
- **Guide into truth** — (John 16:13): Helping us understand God's Word.
- **Spirit of truth** — (John 16:14): Always glorifying Jesus.

- **Voice of direction** — (Acts 13:2): Leading our decisions.
- **One who speaks, leads, and reveals** — (Romans 8:14–17).

He is a person—He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), obeyed, resisted, and honored. To be filled with the Spirit is to walk with Him as our constant companion.

THE EMPOWERING WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus told His disciples to wait for the Spirit:

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1:8)

These were men who had seen miracles, received direct teaching from Jesus, and witnessed the resurrection—yet Jesus said that was not enough. They needed the Spirit.

That same Spirit turned Peter—who denied Jesus—into a bold preacher. He healed the sick (Acts 3), confronted religious leaders (Acts 4), and led the early church with supernatural courage.

The Spirit empowers:

- **Boldness in witness** — (Acts 4:31)
- **Unity and generosity in community** — (Acts 2:44–47)
- **Joy and peace in persecution** — (Acts 13:52)
- **Signs and wonders** — (Acts 5:12–16)

The supernatural life is not rare; it is the ****normal Christian life****. We are meant to experience both the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT: GALATIANS 5

Paul contrasts two ways of life in Galatians 5: the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—cannot be faked. They are grown as we walk in step with the Spirit.

To “keep in step” with the Spirit is like keeping tempo in a song or sailing with the wind. We don’t set the direction; we respond to His leading. The Spirit will prompt actions like forgiving an enemy, speaking truth in love, or giving sacrificially.

Paul warns that spiritual gifts are meaningless without love (1 Corinthians 13). The ****fruit**** of the Spirit is the test of genuine transformation.

THE CALL TO BE FILLED: EPHESIANS 5

Paul's command in Ephesians 5:18 is threefold:

- **Present:** Ongoing. "Be continually filled."
- **Passive:** We receive it—it happens to us.
- **Imperative:** It's not optional.

How do we obey a passive command? The metaphor of sailing is helpful: we can't create the wind, but we can raise the sails. We position ourselves to receive by:

- **Praying and asking (Luke 11:13)**
- **Singing to God and others**
- **Living with gratitude**
- **Submitting to others in community**
- **Receiving prayer and laying on of hands (2 Tim. 1:6)**

Being filled is both a discipline and a gift—reliant on grace but responsive in posture.

SUPERNATURAL AND PRACTICAL

Being filled with the Spirit changes how we respond to suffering, temptation, and everyday life:

- **Supernatural responses:** peace in tragedy, joy in trials, love for enemies.
- **Spiritual gifts:** prophecy, tongues, healing, words of knowledge.

It also produces transformed lives. Like Peter and the early church, we are meant to live with courage, compassion, and clarity—testifying with our words and our lives to the power of Christ.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbors as Jesus did.

THREE SIGNS OF SPIRIT-FILLED LIVING

Paul gives three markers of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:

1. **Singing** — Worship is a lifestyle. We sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with joy, even in trials.
2. **Thanksgiving** — A constant heart posture of gratitude to God, recognizing every gift.
3. **Submission** — Yielding to one another, honoring Christ by walking in humility and accountability.

Spirit-filled churches are marked by joy, unity, humility, and deep dependence on grace.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

Many believers are filled with the Spirit while singing, praying, or receiving ministry. Sometimes it happens quietly; other times dramatically. The point is not the manifestation—but the transformation.

Testimonies abound of healing, prophecy, and freedom. But even more, there are stories of ordinary people loving radically, forgiving deeply, and serving sacrificially.

The Spirit continues to move. As in Acts, He is poured out on “all flesh”—young and old, strong and weak. This is not ancient history; it is present reality.

CONCLUSION: TRIM THE SAILS

To be filled with the Spirit is to live in step with the risen Christ. It's not about emotional highs, but about daily surrender.

Ask:

- **What is God saying to you?**
- **What are you going to do about it?**
- **How can others help you walk it out?**

Let us be a people who hoist the sails—who are ready, open, and expectant for the breath of God to move.

Come, Holy Spirit. We are listening.

Notes

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SESSION
9

Men, Women, Marriage, and Singleness

Men, Women, Marriage, and Singleness

SESSION 9

INTRODUCTION: A COMPASS FOR LIFE

This teaching offers a biblical compass for understanding the design of God for men, women, marriage, singleness, and family—not a return to cultural stereotypes, but a vision rooted in Scripture and grace. In a confused and broken world, we need clarity and compassion.

We recognize the real pain many carry—abuse, infertility, divorce, confusion about identity—but believe God brings restoration through truth. As Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

GOD’S DESIGN FOR GENDER: GENESIS 1—3

Genesis 1:26—28 affirms that both male and female are created in God’s image. They are equal in worth, distinct in role, and commissioned together to be fruitful, multiply, and steward creation.

Genesis 2 shows man formed first, given the task to work and keep the garden. Woman is made as a “helper suitable for him” (*ezer kenegdo*), an equal partner with complementary strength.

Genesis 3 reveals sin’s distortion: the man is passive, the woman acts independently, and both experience brokenness. God holds Adam accountable (3:9), and the curse includes relational conflict and pain. But the gospel begins here—God moves toward them, covering shame and promising redemption.

EQUAL BUT DISTINCT: HEADSHIP AND HELPERSHIP

Scripture teaches equal value but distinct roles (1 Peter 3:7). Headship in the Bible is not dominance but responsibility. Ephesians 5:23 calls the husband the “head” of the wife as Christ is of the church.

- **Husbands:** Called to lead with love, initiate, protect, and sacrifice (Eph. 5:25). Headship is expressed in presence, patience, provision, and prayer.

- **Wives:** Called to respect and support, to help, not hinder (Eph. 5:22). Submission is voluntary trust in response to loving leadership.

These roles are not about gifting or personality—they are about reflecting the Trinity: distinct yet unified.

MARRIAGE: COVENANT AND CALLING

Marriage is a covenantal union designed to reflect Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31–32). It is not merely about companionship but also spiritual formation and kingdom mission.

- **Covenant:** Lifelong, exclusive, self-giving love.
- **Calling:** To make disciples, steward a home, serve the body of Christ.

The order of creation (Genesis 2) and redemption (Ephesians 5) both affirm male headship and female helpship—not as oppression, but as harmony.

Importantly, men are not called to lead all women, nor are all women called to submit to all men. These roles function within marriage and the household of faith.

SINGLENES: SACRED AND STRATEGIC

1 Corinthians 7 honors singleness as a gift. Paul celebrates the ability of single believers to pursue undivided devotion to the Lord.

- **Singleness is not second best—it reflects Jesus and Paul.**
- **It provides strategic availability for kingdom work.**
- **It's a calling to wholeness and intimacy with Christ.**

In both marriage and singleness, identity is rooted in being a child of God. The Church must elevate and support singles, not pity them or isolate them.

RESTORATION IN CHRIST

The gospel brings healing to broken gender roles and relationships. In Christ:

- **Men are redeemed from passivity and domination.**
- **Women are restored from fear and striving.**
- **Families become mission fields and places of grace.**

Ephesians 5:21 urges mutual submission. We give—love, honor, support—not based on merit but on reverence for Christ. The Spirit empowers what sin disfigured.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Husbands

- Lead with humility, initiate hard conversations, pray aloud.

- Prioritize your wife's flourishing over your own comfort.

Wives

- Encourage, speak life, trust God through your husband's imperfect leadership.
- Walk with other godly women for wisdom and strength.

Singles

- Invest in spiritual family, serve sacrificially, rest in God's timing.
- Know that your identity and calling are complete in Christ.

All

- Embrace your season.
- Resist cultural lies.
- Walk in the Spirit.

CONCLUSION: A BETTER STORY

We live in a culture that either distorts roles or dismisses them. The Bible offers a better story—one of mutual honor, joyful submission, sacrificial love, and gospel transformation.

Galatians 3:28 declares equal worth; Ephesians 5 describes distinct roles. Together they form a vision of unity, dignity, and purpose.

Let us build families and communities that reflect heaven, rooted in the Word and empowered by the Spirit.

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10
SESSION

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts

SESSION 10

INTRODUCTION: GIFTS FROM A GENEROUS GOD

Throughout Scripture, we see God’s generosity and abundance—from the beauty of creation to the extravagance of Christ’s miracles. Every good thing is a gift (James 1:17), and the Holy Spirit Himself is called “the gift” (Luke 11:13). Spiritual gifts are one of the primary ways God continues to bless and empower His Church.

They are not rewards for good behavior or spiritual status. As Andrew Wilson says: “They are gifts, not rewards. They are to be received, not earned. They are to be enjoyed, not worshiped. And most obviously, they are always very good.”

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Spiritual gifts are divine empowerments given by the Holy Spirit to every believer for the building up of the Church and the glory of God.

Scripture outlines several lists of gifts:

- **1 Corinthians 12:8-10** — wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation.
- **1 Corinthians 12:28** — apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helps, administration, tongues.
- **Ephesians 4:11-12** — apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers.
- **Romans 12:6-8** — prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, mercy.
- **1 Peter 4:11** — speaking and serving gifts, practiced to glorify God.

Spiritual gifts are the manifestation of the Spirit given “for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). They are supernatural in nature and distributed according to the will of God (Hebrews 2:4).

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Spiritual gifts are central to the life and function of the Church. They reveal God’s presence, edify the body, and advance the mission of the gospel.

- **For edification:** “Strive to excel in building up the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12).
- **For witness:** “Through the Church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known” (Ephesians 3:10).
- **For all believers:** “I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (Acts 2:17–18).

God empowers ordinary people—young, old, men, women, even servants—with His Spirit. This democratization of spiritual power shows that supernatural ministry is for every believer, not just apostles or prophets.

PROPHECY AND TONGUES: CLARIFYING TWO KEY GIFTS

Prophecy is “speaking out something that God gives to you through personal revelation.” It is a spontaneous message for upbuilding, encouragement, or consolation (1 Corinthians 14:1, 3). It must align with Scripture and is often confirmed in community.

Tongues and Interpretation involves speaking or interpreting a language unknown to the speaker—earthly or heavenly (1 Corinthians 14). When used publicly, tongues must be interpreted for the edification of the church. Privately, tongues can be a prayer language that builds up the individual (1 Corinthians 14:4).

Both gifts, while often misunderstood, are meant for the strengthening of the church when practiced biblically.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND ABUSE

Two common ditches:

1. **Comparison** — believing your story must look like someone else’s.
2. **Cessationism** — believing all gifts ceased after salvation or the apostolic age.

The abuse of gifts should not cause disuse. As Sam Storms says, “The response to abuse is not disuse, but proper use.” Just as we don’t abandon marriage or church when we see failure, we are called to redeem and rightly steward spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12–14 gives clear instruction for the orderly use of gifts in the gathered church.

POSTURE: HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

1. **Give Thanks** — Celebrate every gift as evidence of God’s grace. “Gifts cannot be earned, but they can be spurned” (Andrew Wilson).
2. **Steward the Gifts** — Use your gifts “to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Peter 4:10).
3. **Pursue the Gifts** — We are commanded to “earnestly desire” the spiritual gifts, especially prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1). Openness is not enough. God calls us to seek Him and His gifts in faith, prayer, and obedience.

Our posture matters: closed, open, or earnestly desiring. Only the last is biblical obedience.

CONCLUSION: THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

The supernatural life is not an exception—it is the normal Christian life. God works through dreams, visions, prophecy, healing, and gifts of service and encouragement.

From Acts to today, God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary. Through unnamed disciples, women, elders, and children, His Spirit empowers the Church.

Let us walk humbly, give thanks, steward what we've received, and pursue more—all for the glory of God and the building up of His people.

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77
SESSION

Leaders and the Church

Leaders and the Church

SESSION 11

1. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, means “a calling out” or assembly. The church is not a building or event, but the gathered people of God. We are not merely saved from sin, but saved into the family of God.

Metaphors for the Church:

- **Bride (Ephesians 5):** Set apart for Christ, our Groom.
- **Body (1 Corinthians 12):** Composed of diverse, interdependent members.
- **Household (1 Timothy 3:15):** A spiritual family with fathers, mothers, siblings—sharing responsibility and maturity.

Church life involves gathered worship, sound teaching, relational discipleship, mission, and shared truth (1 Timothy 3:15). Truth = life. God’s truth brings health and order to His family.

2. ELDERS: SHEPHERDS AND OVERSEERS

Elders govern the church as servant-leaders, not CEOs. They reflect Christ, the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1–3). Appointed through prayer and fasting (Acts 14:23), elders are essential to establishing a local church (Titus 1:5).

Qualifications (Titus 1:5–9; 1 Timothy 3:1–7):

- **Above reproach, faithful in marriage**
- **Self-controlled, hospitable, sound in doctrine**
- **Able to instruct and rebuke in healthy teaching**
- **Must lead their own families faithfully**

Elders shepherd not by dominance but through example. Their role is marked by spiritual maturity and relational accountability.

3. DEACONS: LEADING THROUGH SERVICE

Deacons are appointed to lead in service and support the elders in practical ministry (Acts 6). Though not required to teach, they must meet high character standards (1 Timothy 3:8–13).

The Greek word *diakonos* means servant or minister. It is applied to many—including Jesus (Romans 15:8), Paul, Phoebe (Romans 16:1), and all believers (Mark 10:43).

Key traits:

- **Worthy of respect, not greedy or double-tongued**
- **Tested, faithful in family life**
- **Their spouses must also display godly character**

Deacons stabilize and strengthen the church. Their role affirms the value of godly service.

4. COWORKERS AND GIFTED LEADERS

Beyond formal roles, the New Testament honors many *synergos*—coworkers in ministry. Romans 16 names over 30 men and women who labored alongside Paul, including:

- **Priscilla and Aquila:** Hosted churches, taught Apollos (Romans 16:3–5)
- **Phoebe:** A deacon and benefactor (Romans 16:1–2)
- **Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus:** Co-laborers in teaching, planting, and care
- **Philip the evangelist and his prophesying daughters** (Acts 21:8–9)

The early church had “call-out culture”—publicly recognizing and releasing gifts for the body’s benefit.

5. GIFTS VS. GOVERNMENT: UNDERSTANDING ORDER

God distinguishes between **government** (elders) and **gifting** (spiritual functions). Elders provide oversight; gifted leaders serve in teaching, prophecy, evangelism, and more (Ephesians 4).

Paul described apostles as “master builders” (1 Corinthians 3:10), laying foundations and appointing elders. Their influence resembled spiritual fatherhood (1 Corinthians 4:15).

Acts 6 models this: Apostles prioritized prayer and the Word; others were appointed to serve tables. Both roles were essential, dignified, and Spirit-led.

Order facilitates freedom. When every part functions properly, the church grows in love and maturity.

6. OUR RESPONSE TO LEADERSHIP

Honor and Trust

- **1 Timothy 5:17–20:** Honor elders, hold them accountable when needed.
- **Hebrews 13:17:** Submit with joy; leaders watch over your souls.
- **1 Peter 5:5:** Be clothed in humility.

Default to Trust

Rather than evaluating leaders for perfection before following, Scripture invites a posture of relational submission—with space for mutual accountability.

Plurality and Relational Leadership

Leadership is never one-man rule. The church thrives on team-based, relational oversight. Plurality protects leaders and helps the church discern God's voice together.

Spiritual maturity involves not just understanding personal identity in Christ, but embracing our shared identity as a family.

7. CONCLUSION: A FAMILY IN ORDER AND ON MISSION

The church is a Spirit-filled family of families. In this household, leaders equip, members contribute, and every person belongs.

Roles in Harmony:

- **Elders: Govern and shepherd**
- **Deacons: Serve and stabilize**
- **Coworkers: Lead and labor**
- **All believers: Called to maturity and mission**

Romans 16 gives a model of gospel partnership—men, women, young, old—all advancing God's Kingdom together.

As we plant churches, raise disciples, and build communities, we do so under the headship of Christ. He is the Shepherd, the Master Builder, and the One we all follow.

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12
SESSION

The Church Sent

The Church Sent

SESSION 12

I. VISION FOR A SENT CHURCH

The Church is more than a weekly gathering or a local institution; it is the global, dynamic, and mission-driven people of God. Scripture provides a vision for the Church that is expansive, not small or self-centered. Our calling is to align our lives with God's eternal purpose—a vision made clear in Revelation 7:9–10. John's vision of heaven reveals a multitude from every tribe, language, people, and nation standing before God's throne, worshiping with a unified voice: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Jesus, in Matthew 28:18–20, issues what is often called the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." The Greek term 'ethnos' refers to ethnic people groups, emphasizing that God's heart spans linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries. As followers of Jesus, we are not to live small lives aimed at comfort and security but expansive lives stewarding our influence for the sake of the gospel.

The Church, then, is sent. Sent to proclaim, to disciple, to serve. Whether we are engineers, teachers, retirees, students, or stay-at-home parents, we are invited into a story far bigger than ourselves. We reject a consumeristic faith and embrace our identity as ambassadors of God's kingdom.

II. MAKING DISCIPLES OF THE NEXT GENERATION

Discipling the next generation is not an auxiliary task—it is central to God's redemptive mission. From the beginning, God called His people to shape future generations through intentional teaching and lifestyle modeling. Deuteronomy 6:4–9 calls for a faith that is whole-hearted and woven into the rhythms of everyday life. Parents are told to teach God's commands diligently to their children—not just in formal lessons but 'when you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, and when you rise.'

Ephesians 6:4 charges parents—especially fathers—to raise their children in the 'discipline and instruction of the Lord.' Genesis 18:19 portrays Abraham's role as a generational leader, one whose faithful household would be the vehicle through which God's blessing reaches the world.

This calling is not just for nuclear families. The Church community—grandparents, singles, mentors—has a role to play in passing on faith. It's about "family on mission." Not sacrificing family for ministry, nor elevating family as the sole purpose, but integrating family into God's global purposes.

This vision includes real struggle and encouragement. Testimonies from parents remind us: we often feel inadequate.

The enemy whispers, “You’re bad at this,” or “It’s too late.” But Scripture tells another story: we are anointed for this work. Our faithfulness in sowing seeds and watering them will bear fruit in God’s timing. Every home is a discipleship center. Our kids don’t need perfect parents—they need faithful ones.

III. MAKING DISCIPLES OF OUR NEIGHBORS

Jesus summarized the law with two commands: love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39). Evangelism is not the job of a few—it is the responsibility of every believer. God has placed people around you who are far from Him but close to you. Neighbors, coworkers, and friends may never step into a church building but may encounter Christ through your life.

Hospitality becomes holy ground. 1 Peter 4:9 says,

“Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

The Greek word ‘philoxenia’ literally means ‘love of strangers.’ Our homes are not retreats—they are outposts of grace.

Luke 10 introduces the concept of “people of peace”—individuals who are receptive to spiritual conversations and relationships. Jesus advises His disciples to stay with those who welcome them. We are not responsible for everyone’s salvation, but we are called to respond to the doors God opens.

Evangelism involves proclamation and presence. 1 Peter 3:15 urges believers to be ready to give a reason for the hope within them—with gentleness and respect. This requires knowledge of the gospel, love for people, and a life-style that reflects Christ.

IV. MAKING DISCIPLES OF THE NATIONS

God’s redemptive plan spans the globe. From Genesis 11’s scattering at Babel to Genesis 12’s promise to Abraham, God has always intended to bless all peoples. Jesus’ call to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19) is a continuation of that promise.

Romans 10:14–15 presents a compelling chain: ‘How will they hear without someone preaching? And how will they preach unless they are sent?’ Over 7,000 unreached people groups remain today—totaling more than 3.4 billion individuals. The task is immense, but the call is clear.

Ways to participate in global missions include:

1. **Going** — Missionaries who live incarnationally among unreached people groups.
2. **Praying** — Intercession for specific people groups, e.g., using the Joshua Project app.
3. **Welcoming** — Immigrants and international students represent nations at our doorstep.
4. **Giving** — Financially supporting mission efforts and workers around the globe.

This is not a matter of choosing between local and global—it is both. As American believers, we must view our privileges as a stewardship. We gather not under a national flag but under the banner of Christ. We are citizens of heaven.

V. THE CHURCH AS MISSION BASE

Rob Rienow summarized this vision well: ‘Our church has 200 ministry centers scattered across the city.’ These are homes where the gospel is lived, hospitality is extended, and discipleship occurs. Church is not a building we attend, but a people we become.

Whether married or single, young or old, each believer is called to participate. We are sent—into homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and nations. The mission of God calls us to live with intention and courage.

John Piper wrote, “Missions exists because worship doesn’t.” The goal is worship—true, global worship of the risen Christ. Until that day, we go—sent by Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, for the glory of God among all peoples.

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13
SESSION

The Church Gathered

The Church Gathered

SESSION 13

I. THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR GATHERING

The Church, by definition, is an assembly—an intentional gathering of believers who belong to one another. This practice of assembling is not optional; it's a divine expectation rooted in Scripture. Hebrews 10:24–25 exhorts believers not to neglect meeting together but to encourage one another as the Day approaches. In Acts 2:42–47, we see the early Church formed through the Spirit's power, marked by deep devotion to teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. Their gathering was not casual—it was daily, joyful, and life-altering.

II. DEVOTED TO TEACHING

Teaching shapes the identity and growth of the Church. Acts 2 highlights the early believers' devotion to the apostles' teaching. This wasn't passive listening—it was transformative engagement. Hebrews 5:12–14 compares spiritual growth to a child maturing from milk to solid food, illustrating that believers are called to move from basic understanding to mature discernment.

2 Timothy 4:2–4 warns of a time when people will abandon sound doctrine for teachings that suit their desires. Faithful teaching nourishes the Church—not as a buffet where we pick our favorites, but as a feast provided by God. Teaching must be received with action. 1 Timothy 4:16 reminds leaders and learners alike to persist in sound teaching, for it brings life to both teacher and hearer.

III. DEVOTED TO FELLOWSHIP (KOINONIA)

The Greek word 'koinonia' implies partnership, communion, and shared life. Fellowship isn't simply friendliness—it's active participation in one another's lives. 1 Peter 4:10 calls believers to serve one another with their gifts, stewarding God's varied grace.

Participation requires presence. Members are encouraged to gather regularly, not as spectators but contributors (1 Corinthians 14:26). This includes Sunday worship, home groups, and sacrificial service. Home groups offer intimate settings to practice 'one another' commands: showing hospitality (1 Peter 4:9), encouraging (1 Thessalonians 5:11), bearing burdens, and confessing sins. These rhythms cultivate spiritual maturity and relational depth.

IV. DEVOTED TO GIVING

Generosity is a reflection of the heart. Jesus said, 'Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matthew 6:21). Acts 4:32—35 shows early believers sharing everything so no one had need. They gave sacrificially, and leadership distributed resources wisely.

Three biblical principles guide giving: Give systematically (1 Corinthians 16:2), generously (2 Corinthians 8:3), and joyfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). Tithing, though not law, is a spiritual principle seen throughout Scripture (Genesis 14, 1 Corinthians 16). It prepares our hearts to live open-handedly, ready to bless others and participate in God's work.

V. DEVOTED TO BREAKING BREAD

The breaking of bread refers both to shared meals and to the Lord's Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:23—26, Paul recounts Jesus instituting communion. When we gather at the table, we look back in remembrance of Christ's death, inward in repentance, outward in unity, and forward to His return. Communion is a time to give thanks and remember together. Whether in home groups or large gatherings, the Lord's Supper reinforces our identity as one body in Christ.

VI. DEVOTED TO PRAYER

Prayer is a communal expression of dependence on God. Acts 2:42 places prayer at the heart of gathered worship. Whether sung or spoken, structured or spontaneous, prayer aligns the Church with the will of the Father. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6) teaches us to exalt God, seek His kingdom, depend on Him daily, forgive and be forgiven, and seek deliverance.

The Church is marked by its prayers. As people linger after services, continue praying in groups, and gather mid-week, we affirm that only God gives life, power, and growth.

VII. FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT — CONTINUED STEADFASTLY

Acts 2 concludes with a simple yet powerful phrase: 'And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.' This fruit was not manufactured by human effort but flowed from a people who were devoted. The King James Version says they 'continued steadfastly.' This is the call for the Church today—to continue steadfastly in gathering, in teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. Spiritual transformation doesn't happen overnight but through day-by-day obedience.

WHY DO WE WORSHIP THE WAY THAT WE DO ON SUNDAYS?

We believe that the gathering of the church (which is the Greek word *ekklesia* - meaning "assembly") is the assembly of believers. The main purpose of the time is for those in the family of God to regularly meet to devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer¹. While we gather as those who have been saved by God's grace, we also use this time to practice hospitality². We recognize that we always have guests among us -- those whom we have personally invited, those who are seeking Christ, and those still far from Him. Our aim is not only for them to be seen and welcomed, but to see and hear a clear presentation of the gospel³, to say truly God is among them⁴, and to come to the personal saving knowledge of Christ⁵.

The public reading⁶ of and preaching of God's Word⁷ is primary and central in our meetings. It is our conviction that the main point of each teaching be both interpreted and supported by the Scriptures⁸. Because of this, we generally teach through specific portions of Scripture, entire books of the Bible, or on a focused topical series -- each with a

desire to give the church family a broad and deep knowledge of God, His Word, and of what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

We are called to sing to one another songs, hymns, and spiritual songs⁹. We sing songs both old and new -- choruses and hymns. Our singing reflects the diversity of expression found in the Psalms: songs that are cries and prayers¹⁰, songs of exaltation¹¹ and lament¹², songs that tell the gospel story in descriptive ways¹³ and songs that repeat words and phrases¹⁴. Sometimes we have an entire band, other times we just have one instrument and sometimes none at all. Our aim in every song is to be united with one voice in worship to God.

We weekly celebrate the Lord's Supper when we come together¹⁵. This reminds us of Christ's sacrificial love and our covenant relationship with him and with each other. All who are born again believers in Christ are free to celebrate at the table with us.

We believe that when we come together each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation¹⁶. Therefore, everyone should come prepared to contribute so that all may be built up. Even though much of that participation happens in individual interactions -- words of encouragement¹⁷, testimonies¹⁸, hugs¹⁹, and prayers²⁰ -- some of these contributions are given to the entire church. These happen in both planned and spontaneous ways. While one does not have a higher value than the other, we do believe it is important to give space for both. With that understanding, we believe that the Sunday meeting is a place for the mature expression of the gifts. In those who lead in teaching, singing, praying, and sharing prophetic words, our aim is to put forward people whose practice of the gifts can be an example to others.

What do we mean by Sunday morning is the mature expression of the gifts? Because the church is a family, we want the culture of our church to feel like a family who has different generations of people at different stages of maturity. Our desire is to give people an opportunity to try, to learn, to fail, and to grow. We also want to model leaders who have been tested over time to be an example to others. This includes those who are teaching, leading songs or prayers, or those sharing prophetic words, tongues, or interpretations.

We also recognize that the size of the gathering brings with it different opportunities and challenges. Home groups provide an opportunity for people to grow in their gifts with more freedom than when the entire church is gathered. Therefore, while there will be times when people will bring a prophetic word, tongue, or interpretation to the entire congregation for the very first time, it will be more common for these public contributions to be given by those whose practice of the gifts has been tested in smaller environments first.

¹ Acts 2:42 | ² Hospitality literally means: to be a friend to strangers. | ³ John 13:35 | ⁴ John 13:35 | ⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:2 | ⁶ 1 Timothy 4:13 | ⁷ Acts 6:2, Acts 15:35, 2 Timothy 4:1-2 | ⁸ Often referred to as expository preaching | ⁹ Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16 | ¹⁰ ie. Psalm 40, 69, 80 | ¹¹ ie. Psalm 24, 57, 96, 145 | ¹² ie. Psalm 6, 38, 130 | ¹³ ie. Psalm 78, 107 | ¹⁴ Psalm 118 and 136 (both have story and repetition), also Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8, 5:13, 7:12 | ¹⁵ In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul uses the phrase "come together" seven times -- with six of them speaking of the church. Chapter 11 gives instructions on the Lord's Supper and 14:26 gives instructions on contributions. | ¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:26 | ¹⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 14:3 | ¹⁸ Revelation 12:11 | ¹⁹ Romans 16:16 (While the Middle Eastern culture of the early church and many cultures today still greet with a kiss, generally Americans greet with a handshake or hug. And you should probably ask someone before you kiss them.) | ²⁰ James 5:16

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14 SESSION

Unity

Unity

SESSION 14

Unity is the distinguishing mark of the Church that reflects the very nature of God—Father, Son, and Spirit in perfect fellowship. Jesus prayed in John 17 that His followers ‘may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me.’ Unity is not uniformity; it is a supernatural togetherness forged by shared faith, common mission, and mutual love. The early Church thrived not because they were the same, but because they were committed to living as one. This document explores how unity is both a gift of the Spirit and a daily pursuit requiring humility, accountability, and grace.

I. THE POWER AND PURPOSE OF UNITY

Genesis 11 and Acts 2 serve as theological bookends. Babel’s unity was self-focused—‘let us make a name for ourselves’—while Pentecost’s unity was Christ-exalting. The confusion of tongues at Babel was reversed as the Spirit empowered each person to hear the gospel in their own language. Unity is powerful—it enables shared purpose, amplifies witness, and reflects the character of God. Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17:20–23 highlights this: ‘That they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.’ Unity, then, is both missional and relational.

II. UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY ABOUT OURSELVES

Romans 12:3–8 offers both caution and encouragement: ‘Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought... but according to the measure of faith God has given you.’ This reorientation is essential in a world that promotes self-exaltation. The Church is called to a countercultural humility, recognizing that each person is both gifted and needed. Paul uses the metaphor of the body: many members, one body, different functions. The Church needs leaders and servants, encouragers and caregivers. Each role matters. As 1 Corinthians 12:18 states, ‘God has arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.’

III. UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

1 Peter 5 outlines how church leaders and members should relate: ‘Shepherd the flock of God that is among you... not domineering, but being examples.’ Mutual submission and humility are not optional—they are the framework for relationships in the body of Christ. Paul encourages believers to ‘clothe yourselves with humility toward one another’ (v. 5) because God ‘gives grace to the humble.’ The church is not a social club but a covenant family. Membership identifies who is ‘among us’—whom leaders serve and who are walking together in accountability. This relational clarity helps the church respond to conflict biblically and pastor with integrity.

IV. UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY

Unity must be guarded amid differing gifts, backgrounds, and perspectives. Ephesians 4:11–16 lays out the blueprint: leaders equip the saints, the body matures, truth is spoken in love, and each part contributes. There's no room for comparison or competition. Galatians 3:28 reminds us that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek... slave nor free... male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' Diversity is a strength, not a liability, when it's submitted to the lordship of Christ.

Unity also means prioritizing kingdom values over personal preferences. Whether it's worship style, leadership methods, or ministry focus, the call to 'make every effort' (Eph. 4:3) is a daily discipline.

V. RESPONDING TO SIN AND PROTECTING UNITY

Matthew 18:15–17 provides a path for restoration, not punishment. Conflict is inevitable, but the way we handle it reveals whether we truly believe the gospel. Step one—go privately—is often the most neglected. Instead of gossip, Jesus calls us to direct, grace-filled confrontation. This builds trust and shows honor. If reconciliation fails, involving witnesses or church leadership becomes necessary—not to shame but to heal.

Gossip, slander, and divisiveness are destructive. Proverbs 16:28 warns that a whisperer 'separates close friends.' Titus 3:10–11 instructs leaders to warn divisive people once or twice—then, if unrepentant, to separate. These practices, though difficult, preserve unity and reflect God's holiness and compassion.

VI. MEMBERSHIP, DISCIPLINE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Church membership is a declaration: I belong here, and I am accountable to these people. Acts 2:42–47 paints the picture—devotion to teaching, fellowship, prayer, and shared life. Membership provides clarity in shepherding and discipline. We know whom we're responsible to disciple, correct, and encourage.

Church discipline, rightly practiced, is redemptive. It's a call to restoration. Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 5 and Galatians 6 emphasize restoring with gentleness, not condemnation. The end goal is repentance and renewed fellowship. This is why baptism brings people in and church discipline sends people out—always in love, never in pride.

VII. GROWING IN MATURITY AND LOVE

Ephesians 4:15–16 closes with a vision of the mature Church: truth spoken in love, every part doing its work, the whole body 'healthy and growing and full of love.' This is the aim—not perfect agreement, but perfect love. Love that is patient, kind, and enduring (1 Corinthians 13).

Unity is strengthened through habits: worship, prayer, shared meals, confession, and service. It is empowered by the Spirit, shaped by the Word, and lived out in community. As we grow together, the Church becomes a light in the darkness—a family on mission that shows the world what redeemed life looks like.

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Statement of Core Beliefs

Statement of Core Beliefs

The following are the core beliefs of James Island Christian Church based on the foundational truths taught in the Bible. All of our teaching and ministry is rooted in and flows out of these biblical doctrines.

GOD

Triune God: We believe in the one true and living God revealed in the Bible who exists eternally in three persons — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — each equal in every divine perfection but distinct in function within the Godhead. He is the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, inexpressibly glorious and holy, and is worthy of all possible worship, honor, and devotion. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

God the Father

We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He infallibly foreknows all that shall come to pass, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. John 4:24; Psalm 147:5; Psalm 83:13; Hebrews 3:4; Romans 1:20; Isaiah 6:3; 1 Peter 1:15 16

God the Son

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect sinless life, performed miracles, and taught the things of God. We believe in His substitutionary death upon the cross, His burial and subsequent bodily resurrection, His ascension into heaven, His perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:6-11; John 1:1, 14; Luke 24:36-43; John 20:24-26; Acts 1:9-11; Colossians 1:13-14; Romans 8:34; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Hebrews 8:1

God the Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, comforter, and guide, leading all believers toward unity in Christ. John 15:26; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; 2 Corinthians 13:14

THE BIBLE

We believe the Holy Bible to be the inspired, inerrant Word of God and is authoritative and sufficient for faith and practice. We believe it is the standard by which all truth, understanding, knowledge, and counsel is evaluated. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21

MANKIND

God made man — male and female — in His own image as the crown of His creation so that man might have fellowship with Him. But through rebellion and disobedience to God's command, man entered into sin and suffered the just condemnation of physical and spiritual death. As a result, all people are separated from God by their sin and are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Jesus Christ. Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Samuel 12:15-23; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23, 5:12, 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-3; Galatians 3:10

SALVATION

Salvation is a free gift that comes only by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, who by His death on the cross, bore the wrath and condemnation of God toward sin, crediting His perfect righteousness to those who trust in Him. Anyone who repents from their sin and believes in Jesus Christ alone for salvation receives forgiveness of sin and eternal life. John 1:12-13; John 3:3-16; John 10:28-29; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30; Isaiah 53:4-5; Romans 4:25; Romans 3:21-25; 1 John 4:10

COVENANT LIFE

We believe God is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, and is the source of life and all necessary provision to those in relationship with Him. All those who are in covenant with God are also united in covenant relationship with one another. This means laying down their lives for one another, loving, forgiving, and serving one another, bearing each other's burdens, and even offering correction and rebuke for the purpose of godliness when necessary. Genesis 12:1-7; Exodus 19:5-6; Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 8:13

THE CHURCH

We believe the very nature and purpose of God is revealed in His Church. Jesus established the Church as His body in the earth. We believe the universal Church consists of all who submit in faith to Jesus' lordship, while the local church is a body of believing people, gathering regularly, observing baptism and the Lord's Supper, and walking in covenant relationship with each other before God. We believe that Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church, has granted authority and given gifts to His body, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip and mature it to do His work in the earth. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Matthew 28:19; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Corinthians 12:14; Ephesians 4:11-16

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

We believe the scriptures set each local church under the authority of a plurality of Elders or Pastors. The ministries of the church are additionally furthered through the faithful service of deacons. We believe the Lord commends His people toward covenant membership in local churches, under personal pastoral care for the maturing of character and development of both personal and corporate ministry. Acts 14:23; Acts 15:22; 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1:5-9

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells and fills all believers. There are many varied scriptural expressions used to describe such encounters — among them are being baptized in the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit, and anointed with the Holy Spirit. These experiences should produce greater commitment to God's will, greater realization of

His power, and greater edification of His Church. We further believe the Holy Spirit imparts gifts or abilities greater than our own to accomplish God's will. These gifts ought to be operative in the Church, supervised by mature leaders, and ministered in love by Christians whose lives reflect godly character. 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 2 Timothy 1:14; Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:18; Acts 1:5; Matthew 3:11; Acts 4:31; 1 Corinthians 12

PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

By the shedding of His blood, Jesus has become our great High Priest and has granted each believer free access to the presence of the Father. There is no mediator between God and man except Jesus Christ. Each believer can now confidently come before God, receive from Him, and offer the sacrifice of worship and obedience. 1 Peter 2:5-9; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 2:5

EVANGELISM

We accept the commission of Jesus Christ, who is Lord, to make disciples of Him among all nations, in our neighborhoods, and in the next generation; seeking to baptize them and teach them to observe His commandments. We join with all those believing in Him to accomplish this urgent task. We accept this as a personal commission, as well as a Church commission. Matthew 28:16-20; Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:11-15; Philemon 6

CHRIST'S RETURN

We believe in the imminent, visible, and glorious return of Jesus Christ. Christians are exhorted to be watchful and obedient until His appearing. While there are many viewpoints concerning His second coming, we believe Christians should lovingly look for His appearing, giving full attention to obedience while He tarries. We believe His appearing will occasion the resurrection of the righteous who have died and are now with Him. Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Acts 24:15

LAST DAYS

We believe in the final judgment at the end of the age. We believe both the righteous and the wicked shall stand before Him and be judged. Those who are in Christ will be rewarded by sharing in God's presence forever, serving Him, and offering Him unending praise and glory. Those who are not in Christ will be eternally punished with Satan and His demons in hell. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Acts 17:31; Revelation 20:11-12; Revelation 19:11

BAPTISM & LORD'S SUPPER

Through the teaching of scripture and Christ's example, we believe in baptism by immersion in water. The obedience of baptism is for all those who have repented of their sins and who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe in the regular observance of the Lord's Supper by baptized believers as commemoration and proclamation of the Lord's death, resurrection, and return. Acts 8:36-39; Matthew 3:5-6; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:12; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Matthew 26:26-29

MARRIAGE

Both man and woman were created in God's image, equal as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. These distinctions are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should be honored and celebrated within the Church. Biblical Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime; such uniting serves to fundamentally and profoundly depict the relationship of Christ and His Bride, the Church. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, laboring sacrificially to provide for, protect, and lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:23-32

CIVIL AUTHORITY

We believe God is the author of all authority. He has ordained civil government for the establishment of order and peace in the nations. We believe it the task of the Church to speak prophetically to the nations, both by its proclamations and its lifestyle. Meanwhile, the Church is admonished to pray for and honor civil government. Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2

Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire width. The lines are thin and consistent in color, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. There are no margins, text, or other markings present on the page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

