

BE

GROUND

ED  
IN JESUS



DISCIPLESHIP  
BOOKLET



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# THE TRINITY & GOD

## THE FATHER

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*“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” – John 17:3*

Many people refer to “god” in a general and abstract way, having misconceptions about His identity and character. It is essential that we build our understanding of God based on Scripture alone, for Jesus claims above (John 17:3) that eternal life is dependent on knowing the Lord rightly as he has revealed himself.

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### THE TRINITY

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It is important to recognize that the Scripture teaches: 1) There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 44:6), 2) God has existed eternally in three persons (Matthew 28:18–20, Ephesians 1:1–14, 2 Corinthians 13:14), 3) Each person is fully God (Genesis 1:2, Hebrews 1:3, John 5:18). A short-hand way of referring to this is to describe God as triune, or to speak of the Trinity. Though this is difficult to comprehend in our human reasoning, this is what the Scripture clearly reveals.

When we understand that we serve One God existing eternally in Three Persons, we begin to understand how John can make the claim: “God is love” (1 John 4:9b). God is love because he has eternally been in relationship within the Godhead. The Father has eternally loved the Son, the Son has eternally loved the Spirit, and so on. God is a god of relationship! We are made in God’s image, thus it should be no surprise that we are designed for relationship with him and others.



3. Why kinds of rights and privileges come with adoption? How does this bring you to worship personally?

***Read John 3:16-17***

4. What is the motivation of the Father sending the son, and what response does the Father desire of us in return?





**Read Luke 15:11-32**

7. Look specifically at verses 21-24. What does this parable teach us about the way the Father deals with us when we approach him for mercy?

Additional verses:

PROVISION

**Matthew 6:25-34** – In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes it clear that we need not worry about our needs in life. We have a heavenly father who loves us and always provides for us. We need only seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

RELATIONSHIP

**Romans 8:14-15** – This text shows us that being adopted as a child of God is a place of unique intimacy. When we have a relationship with Jesus, the Spirit within us prompts us to cry out with longings for our Father.

DISCIPLINE

**Hebrews 12:5-11** – Revealed in Hebrews 12 is the reality that God's love leads to his gracious discipline. The Father disciplines those he loves to ensure their sanctification and eternal security.

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## SUMMARY

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1. There is one God, God exists eternally in three persons, each person is fully God.
2. God the Father planned salvation before the foundation of the world and sent his Son to accomplish the work. He adopts his people and cares for them as a loving Father, ensuring their holiness and security in Him.
3. We must believe and respond to the reality that God our Father loves us and counts us as his own when we have believed in his son. We must fix our minds on the truth that all the rights and privileges of Christ have been given to us.
4. The Father always receives those who come in humility before him recognizing their sin and need for Christ.

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## NOTES

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# GOD THE SON

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Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He was sent by the Father as the promised Messiah to redeem fallen men and women from their sin and to establish His reign as the rightful king of creation. Jesus lived a sinless life, died on a cross as our substitute for sin, and was raised with all power over sin and death. He ascended into heaven and will return as judge. He offers forgiveness of sin and a new life of discipleship by grace through faith in Him.

Considering the infinite and eternal nature of Christ, enough could never be said, or written. There is so much to unpack in Scripture about our Savior, for the Scripture is ultimately all about Him! In this lesson, we will focus specifically on the person and work of Christ, seeking to cover essential elements of His identity and work at the cross.

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## THE PERSON OF CHRIST

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JESUS IS TRULY GOD AND TRULY MAN

*Read Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-3, and John 1:14*

1. Compare Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. What stands out to you?

2. Reading John 1:1-3, what five things does the author communicate about “the Word”?

3. Looking to verse 14, who is “the Word,” and what does it mean that he took on flesh?

4. When you dwell on the truth that Jesus is God, what kind of responses begin to form in your heart and mind? How should this reality influence how you respond to Jesus?

## JESUS IS THE PROMISED CHRIST (MESSIAH)

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Acts 2:36*

The Word “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” Both of these words have the same meaning: Anointed One. Throughout the entire Old Testament, a King is promised who will deliver God’s people, establish peace, and set up an eternal kingdom. Peter is preaching in Acts 2, and he reveals to the Jewish people that Jesus is indeed the King who has come to set up the Kingdom. Jesus has accomplished this through his death and resurrection!







**Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-19**

9. According to Paul, why is the resurrection so critical?

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**SUMMARY**

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1. Jesus is fully God and fully Man. He has existed eternally, but revealed the Father fully by taking on flesh.
2. Jesus lived a sinless life in order that the righteous requirement of the law that we cannot fulfill can be fulfilled in us.
3. Jesus died the death we deserve; he bore the wrath of the Father for our sin as a sacrificial payment.
4. The Resurrection “seals the deal”. If Christ has not been raised, all of Christianity falls.
5. The only rightful response to who Jesus is—absolute surrender and worship!

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## NOTES

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# GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

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The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal with God the Father and God the Son. He is ever-present in the life of a believer and works to advance the gospel of Christ. The Holy Spirit opens hearts to the revelation of God in Scripture and empowers us to be conformed to Christ's image.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE SPIRIT

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*Read John 16:13-14*

1. According to verse 13, where will the Spirit always guide a person?

2. Who does the Spirit work to glorify and bring attention to? Knowing this, if a person or groups claims to be “full of the Spirit,” what should you expect to be hearing and seeing?

## CONVICTS

***Read John 16:8-11***

3. What three things will the Holy Spirit convict the world of?

4. What are some ways you have experienced this personally? How often should we be experiencing conviction of the truth by the Spirit?

## REGENERATES, SEALS, GUARANTEES

***Read Titus 3:4-7 and Ephesians 1:13-14***

Regeneration is the miracle wrought by the Holy Spirit, where a person is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. Jesus refers to regeneration in John 3 as being “born again.” This is a radical change where a person is miraculously changed to have a desire and love for Christ.

5. When is a person filled with the Holy Spirit according to verse 13? Why is this important?

6. When you reflect on the fact that the Spirit dwells within those who believe the gospel, how are you moved in response?

7. The Holy Spirit “guarantees our inheritance,” our future in heaven. Why is this so essential to believe?

## SANCTIFIES AND SENDS

The Holy Spirit miraculously produces fruit and growth in our lives through the Word of God. He transforms us daily to conform us to Jesus' image.

### ***Read Galatians 5:22-24***

8. As you read through the fruit of the Spirit (the outcome of one filled with the Spirit), where do you sense you personally need to grow?

### ***Read Matthew 28:19-20***

9. In what context does Jesus promise to be with us until the end of the age?

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## SUMMARY

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1. The Holy Spirit always leads people into truth and glorifies Christ.
2. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.
3. The Holy Spirit regenerates, seals, and guarantees the inheritance of the believer.
4. He sanctifies every believer in Christ and empowers them to witness of Christ personally.
5. Where have you been challenged in this study of the Spirit? How do you need to practically respond to God?



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## NOTES

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# SCRIPTURE

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We are ending this study in a way similar to how we began—focused upon the Word. However, rather than focusing on the discipline that is required in the Word as a follower of Jesus, this lesson is intended to unpack critical beliefs regarding the nature of what Scripture is. There is always a battle for truth in every generation, will we hold fast to God’s word?

God has spoken to us and made Himself known through His written word. The Bible is called special revelation because it supernaturally reveals the transcendent God of the universe to sinful humans. Human authors wrote the Bible as they were influenced by the Holy Spirit. Scripture is our final authority—it builds the core truths that we believe and guides us to Christ.

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## THE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

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The inspiration of Scripture is the reality that God inspired human authors to pen his word. The inerrancy of Scripture refers to the fact that the Bible is true in all it communicates.



3. Psalm 19:7–11 gives exciting and vivid imagery of the value of God’s word. Have you experienced some of these things personally? How?

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## **THE AUTHORITY AND ETERNALITY OF SCRIPTURE**

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Second Timothy 3:16 teaches us that God “breathed out” his word. We understand that the Bible is supernatural and is itself, alive by the power of the Spirit. God created all things by his word, and he sustains all things by his word (Hebrews 1:3). He is in control, he is in charge, he reigns supreme—what he says is final and binding for our lives.

***Read Isaiah 40:6–8***

4. How does this contrast humble you personally?

5. Where do you personally struggle to surrender to the authority of what God has clearly spoken?

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## THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE

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*Read 2 Peter 1:3–4*

This passage asserts that God has granted us all the things we need for life and godliness. Peter asserts that we have been granted these things through “the knowledge of him who called us,” and by his “precious and very great promises.” The knowledge and promises of God are revealed in Scripture. Therefore, it is the Scripture through which we have all we need for life—it is sufficient!

6. How could we be tempted as a church, or tempted individually, to operate as if the Scripture isn’t sufficient?

7. Inversely, what are things we can do to practically to keep the Word at the center of all we do?

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## **THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE**

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*Read Hebrews 4:12-13*

8. Does the power revealed in Hebrews 4:12-13 bring you to a greater fear of God? Why?

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## THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE

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*Read 2 Timothy 3:14-15*

9. What is the ultimate purpose of all Scripture?

10. How does this influence the way you think about the Bible? Listen to the Bible? Share the Bible? Study the Bible?

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## SUMMARY

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1. The Bible was written by human authors under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Word of God is without error, authoritative, eternal, sufficient and powerful.
3. The Purpose of Scripture is to lead people to glorify Christ, to reveal him.
4. We are desperate for the Scripture because we are desperate for Christ—it is more important than any physical provision in our lives, it is the sustenance of our souls.



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## NOTES

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# THE HOLINESS OF GOD

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Holiness lies at the very heart of understanding who God is. It is the only attribute of God that receives an emphasis of threefold repetition in Scripture: “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 6:3). Encountering, understanding, and experiencing the holiness of God is at the core of the Christian life. When the Scripture says that we must be conformed to the image of Christ, it is undoubtedly referring to Jesus’ holiness! We are commanded to be like him.

God’s holiness carries two distinct connotations: 1) God is transcendent and absolutely separate from his creation; 2) God is perfectly good having no stain to his character—he is complete in moral perfection. This week’s focus will be on texts where God’s holiness is experienced and commanded.

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## ENCOUNTERING GOD’S HOLINESS

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*Read Isaiah 6:1-7*

1. What sticks out to you about Isaiah’s initial response? What does this teach us about what occurs when a man or woman truly encounters the presence of God?

2. Have you experienced moments in life of conviction like this? Explain.

3. How does this text help us have a right perspective of our sin? How might we be tempted to evaluate sin wrongly?



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## COMMANDED TO BE HOLY

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**Read 1 Peter 1:13-16**

*\*Important Definition - Sanctify: to make holy, set apart*

We are commanded to be holy in many passages across Scripture. Read the following two passages that make clear how this takes place.

**Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

6. How does holiness begin in someone's life?

7. How does Jesus' work on the cross relate to our holiness?

8. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and our holiness?

***Read John 17:17***

9. Where must we look to grow in holiness? What changes do you need to make this week to respond to what Jesus says here?

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## SUMMARY

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1. God's holiness involves both his transcendence and complete moral purity.
2. When sinners encounter God's holiness, it is overwhelming and convicting.
3. We see in Scripture that God is gloriously holy, and he must not be approached with disregard for his commands and character—he is to be feared.
4. Holiness begins with Christ and his work of redemption.
5. Essential to growth in holiness is truth, the Word of God changing us by the power of the Spirit.

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## NOTES

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# MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

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Living in a society where there is such controversy over the subject of identity, the Bible speaks clearly about who we have been created to be. The implications of believing or rejecting the Scripture's teaching on identity are drastic, therefore it is critical to develop clarity and conviction as it relates to what has been historically called the *imago dei* (image of God).

The phrase "image of God" is first found in Genesis 1:26–28. While there are many lengthy and nuanced definitions and descriptions of what this entails, the core of being an image-bearer is representing God. God has made us in his likeness in order that, in relationship with him, we would represent and reflect his character for his glory!

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## CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

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***Read Genesis 1:26–31***

1. Considering men and women are made in God's image and likeness, how then should we conceive of our inherent dignity and value? What is it grounded in? Conversely, how does the world define value in a person?

2. If bearing God's image holds a responsibility of representing him, what does this look like practically?

3. Verse 27 emphasizes "male and female." We were created for relationships with one another. How is relationship with other humans a reflection of God's triune nature?



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## **JESUS CHRIST—THE PERFECT IMAGE-BEARER**

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Though the doctrine of sin will be treated fully next week, there must be a recognition that God's image has been marred and broken in human beings due to sin. Sin prevents us from rightly reflecting and representing God in his holiness and glory. While we still are made in his image and possess dignity, we need restoration. The beauty of the gospel is that Jesus has taken on flesh to accomplish this very thing.

***Read Romans 5:12-21***

6. What are the similarities and differences between Adam and Christ? List them.



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## REDEEMED TO BE CONFORMED TO HIS IMAGE

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*Read Romans 8:28-29*

9. How should we be encouraged personally in this pursuit of Christ-likeness according to the passage in Romans?

10. Where is God currently working in you to be conformed to Christ's image? In your speech? Relationships? Attitude? Personality?

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## SUMMARY

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1. Vital to understanding our identity is reflecting on the imago dei. We understand our identity by understanding our relationship to God.
2. We have been created to represent God, living in right relationship with him and those around us.
3. The imago dei is the grounding of key concepts such as: human dignity, gender, marriage, order of creation, proper treatment of one another, identity, and worship.
4. Though the image of God in us has been marred and broken due to sin, in Christ and his perfect life, the image can be restored in us by faith!

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## NOTES

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# DOCTRINE OF SIN

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There are many ways in which the state of God’s creation and our lives can be described—broken, fallen, imperfect. Yet, we have not spoken accurately and clearly about the true problem until we have spoken of sin. Until there is a clear understanding and confession of sin, a person has yet to understand who God is and embrace their inherent dilemma as an individual.

One definition of sin states: Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. The Apostle John makes clear that “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). Sin is the core problem that is addressed in Scripture, it is the foundational problem of life itself. One could rightfully say that the Bible, in summary, is God’s revelation to sinners of how they can be delivered from sin through the work of Christ. Because of the seriousness of sin, it is critical we understand its origin, transmission, and consequences. Errors related to these elements of understanding can lead to false views of God and salvation.

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## SIN’S ORIGIN

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***Read Genesis 3:1–24***

1. How does this initial temptation in the Bible give us insight into how temptation will come in our own lives? How do you see this playing out in your life?

2. What immediate effects of sin do you see? Look to verses 8–19 especially. Think about how you experience these very things today.

3. What is the ultimate tragedy of sin seen in verses 23–24? How does Genesis 3 influence the way you view human sadness and human joy?







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## SUMMARY

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1. Sin began in the garden, when Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to disobey the command of God.
2. Sin entered the world and was transmitted through Adam and his descendants—each of us is born with a sin nature.
3. Sin has so disabled us spiritually we are described as “dead.” The only hope is to receive a new heart from God. Behavior modification is futile.
4. The penalty of sin is clear: death. More than that, the suffering that will follow is eternal.

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## NOTES

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# SALVATION: REGENERATION

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Flowing out of studying the problem of sin, it becomes very clear that God’s work of salvation must be nothing short of miraculous. We are born in sin (Psalm 51), dead in sin (Ephesians 2), and we possess corrupt hearts (Luke 6:45).

Nevertheless, like a thread running through Scripture, God progressively reveals how he is going to change hearts completely. This week, the texts for study will both give clarity to the internal problem of man’s heart because of sin and demonstrate how Christ has come to replace dead hearts with living ones. The theological realities of the Spirit’s work of regeneration in the life of a believer give rise to supernatural and radical obedience to Jesus, because God changes our desires.

Regeneration could be defined as follows: “Regeneration is a miraculous work of God in which he gives spiritual life to those who are dead in sin.” In some ways, regeneration is a mystery—Jesus speaks of regeneration in John 3 as being “born again,” and asserts that no human can understand how it works. While we cannot comprehend the ways of the Spirit of God, we can understand our need for and the result of this miracle.









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## THE WORD AND REGENERATION

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*Read John 6:63 and Acts 16:13-14*

7. How is God's Word connected to regeneration and life given from God?

8. How does this influence the way you do discipleship?  
Evangelism?

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## SUMMARY

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1. Regeneration is a miraculous work of God to raise a person who is dead in sin to new life in Christ.
2. God has revealed our need for a new heart across Scripture.
3. The Spirit of God, working through the Word of God, makes regeneration possible. God awakens a person's soul to the message of Christ to serve and honor him.
4. Regeneration changes a person's inner desires. It moves a person from being a rebel to serving as a worshiper.
5. Regeneration is evidenced through surrender and obedience to Jesus—a life filled with the Spirit of God.

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## NOTES

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# SALVATION: JUSTIFICATION

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John Calvin once said, “Justification by faith is the hinge on which all true religion turns.” One cannot overstate the importance of this truth revealed in Scripture, for the very understanding and power of our salvation is bound up in it. Without justification, there is no forgiveness of sin, there is no giving of the Spirit, there is no restored fellowship with God, there is no hope whatsoever. Our hope and faith rests completely on what Jesus Christ has done to justify us before the Father.

Justification refers to God’s legal declaration that a person is 1) no longer guilty of sin and 2) completely righteous in his sight, all because of the righteous life and sacrificial death of Christ. The issue of our sin against God is a legal one—we are guilty as criminals before the throne of the Holy King. Apart from intervention on his part, we will incur punishment.

The focus of this week will be on passages that demonstrate how justification takes place in the life of a follower of Jesus.





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## **JESUS FULFILLED THE LEGAL DEMANDS OF THE LAW**

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*Read Romans 8:3-4 and Matthew 5:17-18*

3. What does Paul mean in Romans 8 by “weakened by the flesh?” Why are we unable to fulfill God’s law? (Try to answer this question with Scripture from the preceding topics studied: Doctrine of Sin, Regeneration—Heart Problems)

4. How does Jesus “fulfill the law”? What does this mean?

5. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only human who has ever lived in perfection. Why do you think it is so easy to be trapped into thinking that we can please God in our own efforts and strength?

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## **DOUBLE IMPUTATION**

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Both Jesus' payment for sin and his perfect obedience to the law are required for sinners to be justified. To be reconciled in relationship with God, it is not enough to have our debt of sin removed. That would leave us in a neutral position. We need to be found in God's sight as perfectly righteous.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." This text shows how Jesus' payment for sin and his perfect life became the foundation for our righteousness. Jesus both "became sin," (meaning he took the wrath for sin at the cross) and he "knew no sin," (meaning he fulfilled the law), so that we would become righteous. The Bible teaches here and elsewhere what is sometimes called double imputation. Our sin was imputed to (attached to, ascribed to) Jesus at the cross, and his righteousness was imputed to us. The beauty of the gospel is this great exchange—our sin for Christ's righteousness. Our righteousness does not belong to us, therefore there is no ground for boasting—it is Christ's.



8. How does this influence what you should focus on in sharing the gospel? Why is all this such good news?

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## **SUMMARY**

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1. Jesus paid the penalty of sin through his sacrificial death at the cross.
2. Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law through his perfect and sinless life.
3. Believers are justified by having their sin placed upon Christ and his work on the cross, and through receiving Jesus' righteousness credited to their account.
4. Justification, or salvation, is only received through faith in Jesus and his cross.

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## NOTES

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# SALVATION: SANCTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION

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Following God's legal declaration of our justification is the ongoing process of sanctification. Sanctification can be defined in the following way: "Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives." The New Testament makes it clear that the Christian life is a life of growth. Believers grow in their knowledge of God through the Scripture and through this growth in knowledge, by faith, we grow in Christ.

Sanctification should be ongoing throughout our lives until the final step in the application of salvation: glorification. Glorification is the final application of God's salvation, where the presence of sin in believer's lives is fully removed and resurrection bodies are given. While glorification will not ultimately occur until the end of all things and the return of the Lord Jesus, the Bible encourages believers to hope and long for that day.

Salvation refers to more than just justification. It refers to every aspect of God's work of redemption, even things in the future that are promised but have yet to come to pass. Therefore, often in the New Testament, salvation will be spoken of as complete, yet at the same time ongoing and awaiting completion.









7. With all of this in mind so far, why is a proper understanding of the holiness of God crucial for our view of sanctification? What is the ultimate goal of our sanctification?

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## GLORIFICATION

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***Read: 1 Corinthians 15:50–58***

8. When will glorification take place? Do you long for this? Why or why not?

9. How should hope of glorification influence what you value and live for now? Do you feel that you are focused rightly in day-to-day life?

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## SUMMARY

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1. Sanctification has occurred definitively at our regeneration, yet it is an ongoing work in our lives by which we become more like Jesus.
2. Our sanctification is a grace-fueled effort by which we obey the commands of the Lord.
3. While never arriving at perfection, progress in the Christian life means growing in grace and experiencing victory over sin.
4. Glorification will occur in two ways. First, our souls will be glorified at our death. Secondly, our bodies will be glorified at the resurrection of the just and the return of Christ.

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## NOTES

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# CHRIST'S SECOND COMING & JUDGMENT

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The Word of God is clear that there will come a day when the Lord Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. While the second coming of Christ can be a complicated subject, we can be sure of this: our Lord will return and all will be set right at his appearing. This is the consummation of the Christian hope—seeing the Lord Jesus face to face and finding perfect rest in him.

The judgment that the Lord renders will be based on the life of each individual and their personal response to his rule and authority. Those in right relationship with God through the justification of Christ will be saved. Those in rebellion against God will be judged. The judgment given by God to those who are not in relationship with Jesus is based on the perfect standard of his holiness. There is no room to charge the Lord with unfairness.

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## JESUS' SECOND COMING

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*Read Revelation 1:7-8 and Hebrews 9:27-28*

1. According to Revelation 1, how will Christ come and what will it be like?

2. Do you think most Christians live with true hope and fear of God related to the second coming of Jesus? Or is it merely theoretical? Explain.

***Read John 14:1-3***

3. Jesus exhorts us to believe and not be troubled in verse 1. Is this difficult for you to believe and obey personally?

4. Think back to the discussion on glorification. How does this passage inform how we think of Jesus' return and our ultimate hope of being with him?

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## **JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED**

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*Read Revelation 14:9-11; 20:11-15*

5. What does the description of the judgment of the wicked evoke in you? Are you ready for this day?

6. How does this impact your view of and urgency for fighting sin? Practicing evangelism?

7. Why is God's judgment of the wicked an eternal punishment?





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## SUMMARY

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1. Scripture clearly teaches that the Lord Jesus will one day return bodily, and at his return all things will be set right and judgment will be carried out.
2. Those who have believed in the gospel during their lives will enter rest and reward, while those who have rejected the gospel will experience punishment and torment.
3. The punishment and torment that the enemies of Christ experience will be conscious and eternal in nature.
4. Ultimately all will be set right and made new, as the Bible tells us that the New Heavens and the New Earth are the ends for which history is heading.

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## NOTES

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# THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

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If you were to ask someone, “What is a church?” you would likely receive a multitude of answers. Some would describe a church as an organization, institution, or building. Some would describe it as a general group of people who hold similar religious beliefs, while others might say church is “whatever or wherever you find connection with god.”

The Church is a people. The Church is the people that Jesus has purchased with his blood at the cross. The Bible has a lot to say about the Church, or the Bride of Christ, for Jesus is the one who saved and created Her! This first lesson will walk through what the Church is, how we should understand the distinctions between the Church universally and locally, as well as the key marks of the church.

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## THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

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The church finds her beginning during the time of Pentecost in Acts 2. Jesus commanded his disciples to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit, as it would be through this gift that the church was born. In Acts 2, not only do we see the creation and formation of the early church, but we gain clarity as to how a person enters the church.

***Read Acts 2:1-4 and John 16:5-15***

1. Why is this moment (2:1-4) so significant for the uniting and empowerment of Christ's people to move forward with the Great Commission? See Jesus' words preceding this event in John 16 for further clarity.

***Read Ephesians 5:25-27 and Acts 2:36-41***

2. According to Ephesians 5, How did Christ establish the church, and what is his goal for her?

3. What must happen to a person if they are to become a part of the church? (2:36–41—think both inwardly in spirit and outwardly in action)

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## THE UNIVERSAL AND LOCAL CHURCH

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The “Universal Church” could be defined as the sum of all true followers of Jesus Christ for all time, while a local church (Greek **ekklesia**—*assembly*) refers to a local body of believers. A person’s healthy fellowship and membership in a visible, local church is an external expression of one’s healthy fellowship in the universal church. The New Testament address both things conceptually.



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## THE LOCAL CHURCH DEFINED

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*A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ (baptism and the Lord's supper), governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the end of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. (Baptist Faith and Message 2000, Article VII)*

*Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.*





8. Given Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 12, what would happen to a church if everyone tried to be an eye, or a hand, or the mouth? What would also happen to a church if it began to value certain gifts—what Paul describes as body parts—over others?

Based on the passages above, a church is not simply an organization or general gathering of followers of Christ. For a church to be a church, there must be key elements and structures present according to Scripture. A church is a local congregation of believers who share a common faith in Jesus, who commit together to worship Christ, who devote themselves to the Word, participate in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, who recognize the scriptural officers of Pastors and Deacons, and who lead others to know and follow Jesus.

The following lessons will unpack these truths and guide us in understanding these key elements.

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## NOTES

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# THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

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At a most basic level, the purpose of the church is to honor and “glorify the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6). All things the church does should have the ultimate purpose of seeing Jesus’ name lifted above every other name, focus, or interest.

There are many ways we are called to bring the Lord glory in context of the Body of Christ. This lesson will break down these key purposes into three categories: Ministry to God, Ministry to Believers, and Ministry to the World. You will likely notice how each of these categories and purposes overlap with one another.

*These general, structural categories were adapted from Wayne Grudem’s Systematic Theology.*

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## MINISTRY TO GOD: WORSHIP

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**Read Colossians 3:16-17**

1. Is singing optional in local church worship? What is its significance, and why do you think is it so vital?

2. Paul mentions the Word of God in verse 16 as central to our worship. How would you describe the role that God's Word plays in the church in general, and why is it essential to all worship?

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## **MINISTRY TO BELIEVERS: CARE AND DISCIPLESHIP**

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*Read Acts 2:42-47 and Ephesians 4:11-16*

3. What key elements do you see present in early church community in Acts 2? (List at least 6) Explain which elements stand out to you or how you see them exemplified in your context.

4. In Ephesians 4, Paul walks through how Christians will be equipped for the “work of ministry” (v12). How, according to Paul, are we to be equipped for this work?

5. Who has discipled you or invested in you to help you become personally equipped in your faith? Share with the group your personal experience.

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## **MINISTRY TO THE WORLD: MISSION AND MERCY**

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The church is the vehicle through which the gospel moves forward in the world. God has chosen a people to be his ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5), to be a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2) who are proclaiming his excellencies to all those around them. The church is called to be on mission in a world that is dying, broken, and headed for judgment. The church is called by God to share the good news of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and to continually love others sacrificially amidst great evil.

***Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and Luke 6:35-36***

6. What is the ministry that Christ has given us, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17-21? How should this influence the way we view our purpose in being a church member?

7. How can evangelism and mercy ministry go together? Have you ever participated in or witnessed a ministry of mercy done well for the glory of Christ? Please share.

Mission involves everything from personal evangelism to sending missionaries and planting churches across the world. God has called the church to bear witness to the gospel in all kinds of ways, and we should do so until Christ's return.



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## HIGHVIEW'S JOURNEY OF DISCIPLESHIP

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The Scripture shows that the ultimate purpose of any local church is to bring honor and glory to Jesus! In pursuing this end, we are called to be faithful to worship him, to see the body of believers nurtured and equipped, and then sent out on mission into the world to make Christ known.

At Highview, the strategy for seeing these things become a reality across the membership of the church is called The Journey of Discipleship. The Journey of Discipleship includes 4 areas that every member of Highview should be a part of in order that we can be faithful to glorify Christ ourselves and help others to do the same.

**Worship:** Each member of Highview should be regularly engaged in corporate worship, exalting Christ's name for the glory of the Father.

**Community:** Each member of Highview should be regularly engaged in a community group of believers, in order that the truths from Acts 2:42-47, which disclose the importance of relationships, care, and encouragement, can be lived out.

**Discipleship:** Each member of Highview should be regularly engaged in discipleship relationships where they are being equipped, or are equipping others, in accordance with Matthew 28 and Ephesians 4.

**Multiply:** Each member of Highview should be regularly engaged in the Mission of Christ to see sinners rescued from the wrath of God through the proclamation of the gospel.

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## NOTES

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# THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

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*An ordinance is a Christian rite, associated with tangible elements (water; bread and fruit of the vine), that is celebrated by the church of Jesus Christ. The term is closely associated with the word sacrament, which is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace. (Gregg R. Allison)*

The two ordinances of Jesus' church that we celebrate in worship of him are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The reason we typically use the term "ordinance" and not the word "sacrament" is for theological clarity. The word "sacrament" tends to connote certain ideas that are theologically incorrect. "Sacrament" is often used in theological contexts where there is an errant belief that God infuses or dispenses his grace to sinners through the sacraments. Biblically speaking, this is a false view of these activities because it denies a rightful view of justification by faith. It promotes a works-based mentality whereby we put ourselves in right standing with God through our faithfulness to participate in said sacraments

An accurate view of the church ordinances must begin with an unconfused understanding of salvation. The Bible teaches that sinners are saved from the wrath of God and reconciled to him "by grace through faith..." (Ephesians 2:8-9). The moment a person puts their faith in Jesus, they are justified once and for all (Romans 3:24-26). Therefore, any view of ordinances within the church must healthily correspond with this reality. The ordinances are outward signs of spiritual realities that we have come to enjoy through faith in Jesus. They are tangible ways we are called to express faith, worship Christ, and reflect upon his work.





5. First Peter 3:21 says that baptism is a person's "appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." How does this language solidify understanding that only someone who is actively trusting Jesus for salvation should be baptized?

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## THE LORD'S SUPPER

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### SIGNIFICANCE AND MEANING

*Read Matthew 26:26–29*

6. What do the elements (bread and the cup) represent of Christ? Why is each significant, and how does dwelling on these elements help us worship Jesus in our corporate moments of taking the Lord's Supper?

7. What is the New Covenant (verse 28) and how does a person enter the New Covenant? How does knowing this keep us from the error of believing that the bread and cup have an effect of imparting holiness or grace?

8. What yearly event in the nation of Israel that began in the Old Testament does the Lord's Supper correspond with? (see Exodus 12 for help)





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## NOTES

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# THE OFFICES OF THE CHURCH

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In terms of organization, there are two primary offices that are held within a local church: Pastors (Elders/Overseers) and Deacons. This is once again instructive to us regarding the nature of the church and why it is insufficient to view church through a universal lens only. These offices only function and are coherent in context of a local church and its membership of believers.

This lesson will help give clarity to the roles of these offices, and it will also bring forward truth related to qualifications for these offices.

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## PASTOR/ELDER

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Across the New Testament, there are varying titles used to describe this office: *Pastor (Shepherd)*, *Elder*, *Overseer*, *Teacher*. Though each may hold a different nuance of meaning, the New Testament authors are referring generally to the same role within the church.



## ROLE / FUNCTION

***Read 1 Peter 5:1-5 and 2 Timothy 4:1-5***

3. What key responsibilities does Scripture place upon pastors? How can fleshly/worldly ideas of pastoral responsibility creep in the minds of both pastors and church members?

***Read 1 Timothy 2:8-14***

4. What does verse 12 reveal about the office of pastor/elder? What two elements does Paul command only be carried out by men?

5. Look to verse 13. To what does Paul root his argument? Why does this foundation prevent us from making an appeal that things are different for us today in modern society?

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## DEACON

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### QUALIFICATIONS

***Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13***

6. While it is true that qualifications are listed and required for pastors and deacons, why should it be the case that all Christians strive to meet these qualifications? Where in these lists are you challenged to grow and make changes?

## ROLE / FUNCTION

*Greek **Diakonos**: servant—a leader in the church who is committed to serve God through meeting the needs of the church, characterized by a disposition of humility and self-sacrifice.*

### **Read Acts 6:1–6**

7. How do the events in this passage give us helpful instruction to the character and role of a deacon?

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## NOTES

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# CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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Being a member of a local church is a gift and blessing. Jesus has not only saved us from sin, but he saved us to place us within Christian community where we can grow and thrive. It is within the context of the local church where we are pointed to God's Word, encouraged through difficulty, held accountable for obedience, disciplined to maturity, loved through grief, and challenged in mission.

Sometimes, it is claimed that "church membership" is not in the Bible. Yet, there are many things we believe in the Bible that aren't necessarily phrased in Scripture the way we describe them. For example: the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, but a careful study of Scripture will demonstrate that there is one God who has existed eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:4, John 1:1, John 17:5, John 4:24, etc). We see the truth of who God is, and we take careful and proper steps to describe him based on how he has revealed himself in his Word.

When it comes to the topic of church membership, the logic is similar. We see in the Bible that there is such thing as a local church (see lesson 1). We know what a local church is and what a local church does. We know that there are members within local churches and there is a certain way that we are called to function together. The Lord calls us to visibly express our healthy fellowship within the universal church and our submission to his authority through proper fellowship with a church locally under its authority. This lesson will focus on how these conclusions are reached based on the Scripture.





3. What are the blessings of being a member of a church?

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE—CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ON DISPLAY

***Read 1 Corinthians 5:1–13***

4. Explain briefly what took place at the Church of Corinth. What is the ultimate goal of the church discipline process?



Baptism is likely the indicator by which the church at Corinth and others in the first century understood who was “inside” and “outside” the body. Through this outward expression, a person visibly professed Christ as Lord and publicly demonstrated their entrance and submission to the church in which they were involved (Acts 2:41). The leaders of the church at Corinth would have known formally who was “inside,” or who was a member, within their local church body. If this wasn’t the case, Paul’s command to excommunicate this individual would have been incoherent.

In the same way today, if someone is baptized in our church, they immediately become a member of the church at a local level. The Scripture is clear that baptism of the Spirit (which happens inwardly) is what unites someone to Christ and the people of his kingdom universally. Water baptism is the outward expression of what God has done and how someone shows solidarity with the body of Christ.

The question arises: “What happens when a person has already been baptized but moves to a different local church? How does a person who has already believed in Christ and been baptized enter formally to be considered inside the new local church they are attending?” One thing is certain—they should not be baptized again! A person puts their faith in Christ and is obedient in believer’s baptism by immersion only once. Yet, it isn’t sufficient to consider someone “inside” who is simply attending on a regular basis either—often the unsaved attend on a regular basis.

Though churches could differ on how they seek to formalize and visibly determine who is “inside” and “outside” (or who is a member and non-member), the most effective way is through a process of public confession of faith and commitment to the new local body. Simply put—a

person should publicly demonstrate their solidarity, submission, and commitment to the local body of believers by giving their word. Various churches approach this process differently.

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## ADDITIONAL PASSAGES ON MEMBERSHIP IN CHRIST'S BODY

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*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3)*

Church leaders can only effectively care for the flock if the flock is clearly identified.

*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)*

An idea of universal church membership is insufficient to explain how submission to leaders takes place. There are not leaders of the universal church but only of the local church. It is through the local church we put ourselves under Christ's authority.

*"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15-17)*

Only through membership can we effectively identify if someone falls in the category of “brother” as seen in this text. Further, only in membership is there the necessary accountability and authority in place in order that this command of Christ can be carried out at a local church level.

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## HIGHVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP EXPECTATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS

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### COMMITMENT OF HIGHVIEW PASTORS:

- That pastors and deacons will meet the criteria assigned to them in the Scriptures.
- To prayerfully seek God's will for our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability.
- To care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love.
- To pray for you regularly.
- To provide teaching and counsel from the whole of Scripture.
- To equip the members of the church for the work of ministry.
- To be on guard against false teachers and teaching.
- To lovingly exercise discipline when necessary for the glory of God.
- To set an example and join members in fulfilling the obligations of church membership.



## COMMITMENT OF HIGHVIEW MEMBERS:

As those who have experienced the grace of a life changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to reflect the character of Christ. Our expectations of members do not add to the biblical obligations of a believer. Rather, this non-exhaustive list only explains what Scripture teaches about the obedience that faith produces. By the power of the Holy Spirit, I agree...

- That I am a Christian who has repented of my sin and embraced Jesus as Savior and have been baptized by immersion after my conversion as a testimony.
- To submit to the authority of the Scriptures.
- To pursue Jesus Christ through Bible reading, prayer, and fellowship.
- To regularly participate in the life of Highview in worship, a community group, and serving.
- To steward the resources God has given me, including time, talents, and treasures. This includes regular financial giving and service.
- To submit to biblical discipline by church leadership if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15–17).
- To walk in holiness as an act of worship to Jesus Christ.
- To practice chastity unless married and, if married, complete fidelity within heterosexual and monogamous marriage.
- To preserve the gift of marriage and walk through steps of marriage reconciliation at Highview before pursuing divorce from my spouse.
- To refrain from illegal drug use, drunkenness, gossip, and other sinful behavior as the Bible dictates.

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## NOTES

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