

Next Steps - Commitment

Session Four

BAPTISM

When one surrenders their life to Christ and accepts Him into their heart, one needs to be baptized. Baptism is, in fact, a public profession of one's commitment to Christ. This act not only bears witness to the fact that one has accepted Christ as Savior and believes that He is the Christ, but it is also the very first act of obedience as a follower, testifying of one's belief. Baptism is most certainly important.

Additionally, we find that Jesus is baptized. In the gospel accounts, John the Baptist is said to have baptized Jesus. In Mark it is stated,

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

So, as we commit ourselves to follow after Jesus, we must do as He did and be baptized. But, not only is this example prevalent, His command to be baptized is as well. This mandate to baptize can be found in Matthew. We call it The Great Commission.

Jesus said, Go then to all people everywhere and make them My disciples, **baptize** them in the name of the Father; the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Now that we've covered the “why?”, we might ask “what?”. What is its meaning? First, it needs to be understood that baptism does not take place in some powerful, magical water. It is symbolic. It represents something very powerful. The transformation in Jesus has already started through the decision to accept, believe and follow Him. Baptism emphasizes the incredible core components to what Jesus did and is

doing in your heart and the hearts of mankind. It illustrates for us Christ's death and resurrection. Scripture explains that when you are baptized you are buried (immersed in water) with Christ and then you are also raised (brought back up from the water) with Christ (Colossians 2:12). It is essentially death to the old self (sin) and the resurrection of the new "born again" Christian (rejuvenated / transformed believer) (2 Corinthians 5:17).

To reiterate, baptism is very important. If you have accepted Christ as Savior into your life, baptism should follow this as soon as possible. If you are needing to take this next step, talk with one of our pastors.

VIEW VIDEO: "BAPTISM"

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is also important. It is not at the core of accepting and following Christ, but is a natural off-shoot of committing to Christ. Christ loved the church. In fact, the church is referred to in scripture as the 'bride of Christ'. The affinity is apparent and illustrates how close and devoted both are to each other. So, it is logical to regard the church as an institution we must support and be involved in for both the equipping of the saints and the furthering of the good news about what saves mankind from death and destruction. Having stated that, there are four good reasons to become a member of Christ's local church (Fellowship). These help us understand why membership is important.

- It is **biblical**

Christ committed to the church (Matthew 16:18).

- It exists for our **culture**

It is an antidote to our society (Colossians 2:8 & Ephesians 4:14).

- It is **practical**

It defines who can be counted on in our world (Matthew 5:13-16).

- It is **personal**

It produces spiritual growth (1 Peter 2:1-3).

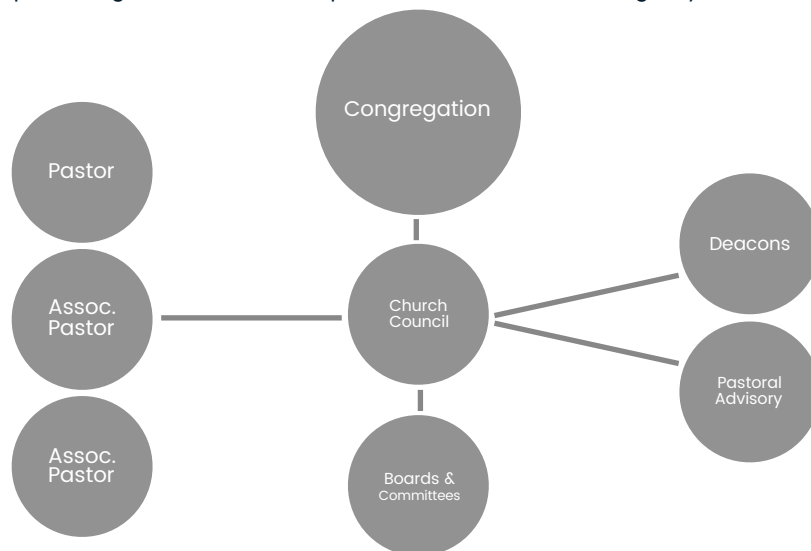
Membership at Fellowship is no different. One thing to point out is that we only expect our members to do what the Bible expects every Christian to do. And, these expectations are spelled out at the end of this section.

OUR STRUCTURE

At the head of the church is Jesus Christ. No pastor or person is considered to be the lead. And, all that Fellowship endeavors to be and do is reflective of Christ's priorities and teachings. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we desire to discern God's design in all things.

As a member, you will be considered a minister. We consider all members as ministers that God plans to utilize for the furthering of His kingdom. The pastors of Fellowship are really the equippers involved in teaching, facilitating and guiding the ministers of the church (Ephesians 4:11-12). In light of this truth, we function on the basis of spiritual giftedness. Everyone has been given gifts to use for Christ and the church accomplishes her objectives through these various abilities and talents. It was apostle Paul who taught the churches he had planted that each believer had a God-given gift meant for use in the work of the building up of the church (Romans 12:4-6). You are very instrumental in what God wants to do in and through His church. Here at Fellowship, we depend on the members to meet our objectives. In our structure as a church, a high emphasis is placed on the voice and work of the members in the congregation.

As an example in diagram form, Fellowship is structured in the following way:



OUR PURPOSE

Fellowship is driven by one underlying goal and that is to “**Develop faithful followers of Jesus Christ**”. This is our mission derived from the very words of Jesus before He left this earth. This drives all that we do as a people and as Christ’s church. In addition to this, we have three core methods to achieve our goal (and mandate from Christ). The table below is a great layout to refer to as you journey through maturing in Christ along with His church. In order for the church to achieve developing faithful followers successfully, we believe that the following building blocks need to be sought after in each of our lives in devotion to Christ.

Your level of Development	Level Defined	Biblical Basis
<p>LEARNER “Saved Servant”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Personal relationship with Christ has started. •Attending Bible studies and worship services. •Volunteering for ministries 	<p>Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.</p>
<p>LEADER “Guiding Shepherd”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You’re an active contributor to the life of the church. •You encourage others around you to do the same. •Leading a group(s) and/or ministry. 	<p>Proverbs 11:14 Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory. Psalms 78:72 He shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.</p>
<p>MULTIPLIER “Equipper”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •You not only make disciples, but also make “disciple-makers” •You have a vision that reaches out more than two generations. 	<p>2 Timothy 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Ephesians 4:11-13 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.</p>

OUR DISTINCTIVES

First, it should be understood that we believe Christ is available to and accessible by anyone in the world who will reach out to Him by faith and believe in Him. As General Baptists, we believe in general atonement, hence the word "general" in our name. General atonement sets forth the concept that Christ died for all. Scripture states that Christ tasted death for all (Hebrews 2:9). Second, we believe in believer's baptism. This explains why the word "baptist" is in our name as well. In essence, we baptize anyone who accepts Christ as Savior of their life and surrenders to Him and His service. The mode of baptism we subscribe to is called immersion. The believer is to be dunked fully into water to be baptized. The symbolism is rich as it mimics what Christ did in His death and resurrection. Additionally, it symbolizes a new believer being resurrected from sin and death into the newness of life with Christ. For scriptural basis, please reference Romans 6:34 and Colossians 2:12 in your Bible.

Another sacrament that we hold dear is communion. Not much regarding how we do this sacrament distinguishes us from other churches. However, at Fellowship, we do believe in "open communion". This simply means that you don't have to be a member in order to join in taking the elements of communion. Rather, if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, you can take part. We take the elements and remember what Jesus did for us. It is a time of both repentance and remembrance as we consider our redemption given to us so freely. Please refer to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 for our basis of taking communion.

Various churches and denominations share core beliefs regarding the Gospel. But, certain doctrinal distinctives make General Baptists unique. And, it should be noted, while we expect unity in our church, we do not expect uniformity. As members we may have our differences (based on our backgrounds) regarding doctrine, but our hope is for harmony through respect and consideration for each other and the General Baptist beliefs.

*To view a more detailed list of the General Baptist statements of faith (beliefs), go online to our church website: fellowshipgbchurch.com (choose "about us")

VIEW VIDEO: "DISTINCTIVES"

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

REVIEW & FILL IN THE BLANK

1. Baptism is, in fact, a _____ profession of one's _____ to Christ.
2. Baptism illustrates for us Christ's _____ and _____.
3. Membership is _____ and it exists for our _____.
4. Membership is _____ and it is _____.
5. At the head of the church is _____.
6. Becoming faithful followers of Jesus Christ involves each of us pursuing certain building blocks of devotion to Him. Those are:
L _____ , L _____ , M _____ .
7. _____ atonement sets forth the concept that Christ died for _____.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

In light of what was referred to regarding baptism (obedience, the example of Christ, & symbolism), what does this sacrament mean to you? In your own words, please describe it.

How should the role of membership be carried out in the church? Is this merely a title or is it more? Explain.

Fellowship considers her members to be ministers. In light of this and the structure of the church, how does this play out? Why is this so vital to the success of the church meeting the mission of developing disciples of Jesus Christ?

How is it that knowing the distinctives and doctrine of what you believe helpful in our walk with Christ?

COMMITMENT CONTRACT

(You may go ahead with this section or wait until our session together – we will review this)

Having received Christ as Lord and Savior and been baptized, one can enter into membership with Fellowship. There are a few very important foundations to agree to in your becoming a member of Fellowship Church:

(check the following once you've read and agree / sign at the end)

I will protect the unity of the church

- By acting in love toward other members
- By refusing to gossip
- By following the leaders

“Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony...live in harmony with each other...have sincere love...” (Romans 15:19)

“Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what builds up others.” (Ephesians 4:29)

“Obey your leaders and follow their orders. They watch over your souls without resting, since they must give to God an account of their service. If you obey them, they will do their work gladly; if not, they will do it with sadness, and that would be of no help to you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

I will share the responsibility of my church

- By praying for it's growth (spiritually & numerically)
- By inviting the unchurched to attend
- By warmly welcoming those who are new guests

“We always thank God for you all and always mention you in our prayers.” (Thessalonians 1:2)

“So the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the country roads and lanes and make people come in, so that my house will be full.’” (Luke 14:23)

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

I will serve the ministry of my church

- By discovering my gifts and talents to use for God's work
- By being equipped to serve by my pastors
- By developing a servant's heart

"Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God." (1 Peter 4:10)

"It was he who gave gifts to people; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, others to be evangelists, others to be pastors and teachers. He did this to prepare all God's people for the work of Christian service, in order to build up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11,12)

"Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. The attitude you should have is the one that Christ Jesus had: Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness." (Philippians 2:3-5, 7)

I will support the testimony of my church

- By attending faithfully
- By living a godly life
- By giving regularly

"Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another all the more, since you see that the day of the Lord is coming nearer." (Hebrews 10:25)

"Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires..." (Philippians 1:27)

“Every Sunday each of you must put aside some money, in proportion to what you have earned, and save it up, so that there will be no need to collect money when I come.” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

“One tenth of all the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, belongs to the Lord.” (Leviticus 27:30)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Pastor: _____