

Membership Handbook

Connecting People to God and One
Another

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Welcome from Ecclesiastical Leadership Team

On behalf of the Leadership Team we want to welcome you to the Bridge Church | Baton Rouge. We are overjoyed that you have chosen to grow in Christ with us. Please feel free to reach out to anyone in this congregation. Throughout your orientation and introduction to the Bridge we encourage you to inquire and learn about our vision and mission.

You may be asking yourself, “Why do I have to go through a process of placing membership at the Bridge?” This is a good question and deserves an appropriate response from the Leadership Team.

First of all, we consider membership to a local congregation to be one that is fundamental to the spiritual growth of both the church member and the congregation itself; believing that the local church is the place where transformation is made possible. God created us to be in relationship with Him and with one another.

Second, from our experience every Christian has expectations of their respective church, and every church has expectations from every member. Our membership process is geared towards discovering a sense of mutuality on these expectations. There is no greater threat to unity than to have “unspoken expectations”. Putting these expectations in writing through this membership process is one way of ensuring everyone is aware of what we expect from one another.

Finally, this membership process acts as a catalyst for unity. Jesus Christ prayed that all Christians should be one just like he and the Father (John 17). Later in the New Testament, Paul expresses a sincere desire for Christians to be unified in *mind* and *thought* (1 Corinthians 1:10). We believe the best way to achieve unity within a local congregation is to get on the *same sheet of music* in the beginning of the relationship. This membership process introduces you to the church leadership and biblical authority, speaks to our core values and teachings, and prepares the new member to immediately feel part of the Bridge family.

The membership process includes six classes. Please see your ministry leader or the website (www.bridgechurchbr.com) for scheduled dates and times for these classes.

We hope you enjoy this process, and we look forward to bringing glory to God as we partner towards building God’s kingdom here on earth.

In Him,

The Leadership Team

Our Church Vision

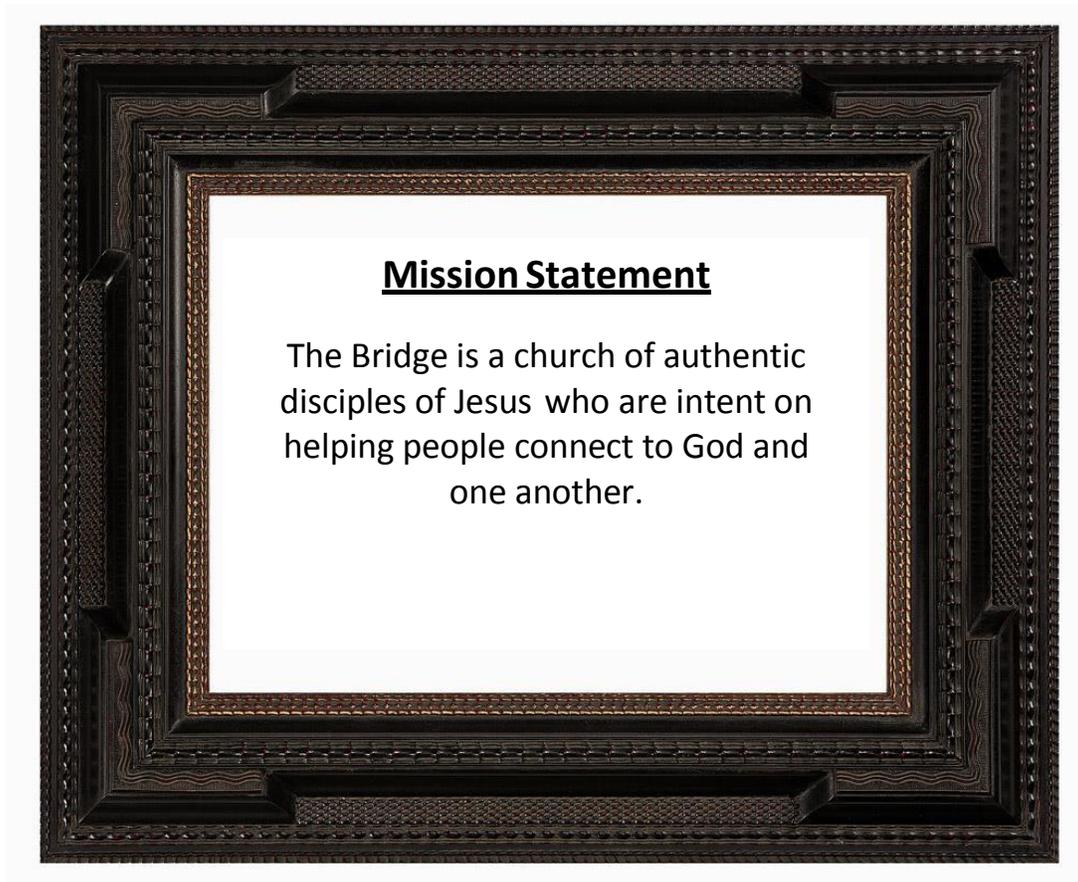


¹⁸ Where there is no revelation (vision), the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.

Proverbs 29:18

Vision

“To be a loving multi-cultural and impactful Christian church through active, Bible-based worship, teaching, and service throughout the local, regional, and international community.”



Class 1: General Overview & Expression of Our Beliefs

As a church member, it is essential that you understand your role and responsibility within the local body of Christ, as well as the universal body of Christ. As a baptized believer you are the church, “ecclesia”, which means you have been called out of the world and brought into the Church. As disciples in God’s Church, you have been sanctified (set apart) for the work of the Lord. As the church of Jesus Christ, our Lordship is expressed through five fundamental responsibilities to the body of Christ (classes 2 – 6 will review these responsibilities in more detail. They are embodied in the early church; found in the book of Acts (Acts 2:38-42) and listed here:



You will encounter these fundamental principles throughout your membership process and in the church life here at the Bridge. These principles govern our interaction with both the Divine and one another. *Acts 2:42 is devotion to Bible, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer.

Expression of Our Beliefs

He told them this parable: “No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, ‘The old is better.’” (Luke 5:36-39)

In this parable from Jesus the “old wineskins” represented the heritage and institution that contained traditional beliefs. The “new wine” represented values that did not appeal to an established segment of society, but were joyfully embraced as relevant to a new crowd. New wine needs fresh wineskins. Jesus did not approve of the culture that wouldn’t accept the “new wine” of his presence and influence. In this

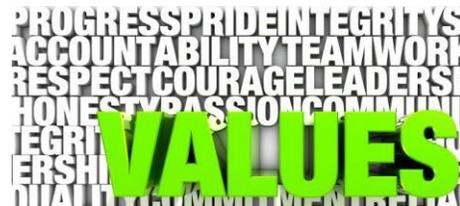


parable, tax collectors welcomed Jesus with a great reception while local religious figures complained about him (Luke 5:27-35). Our wineskins, or spiritual culture, have not been well defined in Louisiana.

Furthermore, our Restoration Movement heritage is averse to written creeds. Yet we admit, it is stuffed to the brim with unspoken rules — unspoken until they are broken. Merely saying, “we just believe the Bible” has often been a way to avoid going deeper. It is prudent now to restate some core beliefs.

At the outset, we have always believed the core of Christianity includes the acceptance of the Bible as God’s inspired Word, Jesus Christ as God incarnate (in the flesh), and that he lived, died and rose from the grave. All those who put their faith in the one true God, repent of their sins, are baptized in his name for the forgiveness of their sins, and live under his Lordship are Christians. These Christian tenets — commonly called “the rule of faith” — were evident in the first Christian sermon preached by the apostle Peter (Acts 2:14-39). There is more to our practical Christianity than our baptismal beliefs. To really thrive and not merely survive, we require a sound theology about Jesus that governs our church for the long haul. We must evaluate our convictions with fresh biblical studies to progress beyond our elementary teachings in order to address the current needs of our culture. Otherwise, the new wine of Jesus will burst our wineskins.

The Leadership Team has set forth these church values. This is a living document, meant to be a flexible expression of our church culture. The values are not listed in any particular order.



For Developing a Quality Church Culture

1. **Centrality of Jesus:** We proclaim that Jesus alone is the Prince, Author, and Mediator of our faith and he stands so far beyond what any human could be that our heartfelt affection and speech should reflect such distinct awe and devotion. (Acts 3:14, 14:11-15, Hebrews 2:10, 12:2)
2. **Congregational Unity:** We intend to preserve our harmony in Christ through abiding in his one-another commands, which is by far more important than imposing our individual views on disputable matters. (Ephesians 4:3-6, John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 4:8-10, Hebrews 3:12-13, Romans 14)
3. **Worldwide Brotherhood:** We advocate a wide-reaching sense of family among willing churches, where we associate, interrelate, educate and facilitate service with each other. We encourage self-government among similar churches, though not the separatism that is often associated with the term “congregational autonomy.” The concept of a brotherhood is used to express the tight association between agreeable congregations. (Acts 15:1-33, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8, 2:13-14)
4. **Prayer Focused:** We commit to take our strongest feelings to the Lord in prayer (be it plans opinions or accusations) before we express them. (James 3:9-10, 4:1-2, 13-16, Matthew 12:33-37, Colossians 4:2-6)
5. **Christian Rebirth:** We maintain that salvation entails a faith in Jesus who died for our sins and rose from the dead, confession of his name, repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 2:38, 8:34-38, 22:16, Romans 10:9-10, 1 Peter 1:3)
6. **Grace and Works:** We will proclaim regularly that we are saved by God’s grace (favor) through our covenant relationship, and not by the energy we exert in relation to works or performances. We are

not saved by works, but are saved to do good works which God planned in advance. (Matthew 11:28-30, Ephesians 2:8-10, 1 Corinthians 15:10, Titus 2:10)

7. **The Mercy of God:** We argue that the mercy of God is available to **ALL**. He has displayed his mercy to banished kings, leaders of apostasy, delinquent ministers, ruthless terrorists, cowardly apostles, and hate-filled persecutors. (2 Chronicles 33, Exodus 32, Joel 2:12-14, Matthew 5:7, 26:69-75, Luke 23:32-43, Acts 22:1-16)
8. **Freedom in Christ:** We declare our trust in each Christian's ability to express his or her freedoms, understanding that love — and at times the needs of our brothers and sisters — compels us to limit our freedoms. (Romans 14, Galatians 5:13-15)
9. **Teaching Disciples:** We maintain that every Christian is a student and is to be committed to some form of discipling (mentoring & training), which is the strengthening process that originated with Jesus Christ. Discipling models usually exist in mentor, peer, or group relationships. (Matthew 28:18-20, Colossians 1:28-29)
10. **The Call of All Believers:** We believe in the call of God, whereas believers all throughout the Bible responded in faith and obedience when called by God to go anywhere, or give up everything, or do anything for our Lord. The call is not always immediately apparent or exactly the same from disciple to disciple. (Exodus 3-4, Hebrews 11:7-16, Luke 9:57-62)
11. **Dating and Engagement:** We assert that dating relationships and engagements create a yoke between a man and a woman. Christians, especially those who are particularly young or new to the faith, are encouraged to pursue help in building their relationship on a spiritual foundation. The onus is mostly on the disciple, whether young or old, to seek advice and guidance with an eye on maintaining purity, and to marry only a faithful Christian. (Genesis 24:3, Joshua 23:11-13, 1 Corinthians 7:39, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 5:3)
12. **Evangelism Methods:** We will use adaptable Bible study tools to assist ambassadors of Christ for reaching the ever-changing world around us. Sound conversions take place because of the message, not methods. (Acts 18:24-26, Romans 6:14, 10:14-17, Ephesians 4:20-24)
13. **Authority Boundaries:** We affirm that God provides boundaries on both sides of authority to protect those under and those in authority. (Romans 13:1, Acts 5:29, Hebrews 13:7-9, 3 John 11)
14. **Leaving the Church:** We declare that those who leave the local body might include the faithful, the weak, the hurt, as well as the backsliders, deserters, and apostates. (Acts 15:36-40, Hebrews 10:35-39, 1 Timothy 1:18-20)
15. **Conflict Resolution:** We assert that the church is equipped to reconcile its members when one member sins against another, even if this means agreeing to get help from others in congregations of our same fellowship. We also recognize the humility in seeking conflict resolution strategies outside of our immediate fellowship as well. (Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8)
16. **Fragrant Offerings:** We declare that we will each give to God fragrant offerings, participating in covering expenses, supporting local ministry, far away missions, the poor and special needs among the church according to our own convictions. (Matthew 26:6-13, 1 Corinthians 9:14, Philippians 4:18, Acts 4:36-37)
17. **Ministry Support:** We will sensibly compensate our full-time ministers (including women) for the value of their work, neither muzzling an ox nor enabling greed, in accordance with Scripture. (1 Corinthians 9:7-14, 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Romans 16:1-2)
18. **Spiritual Priorities:** We affirm three distinct features of healthy spirituality: Our reason for being is to know, love, and glorify God. Secondly, our purpose is to make God known through our lives and deeds. Lastly, our mission is to preach the gospel, discipling the nations. (1 Peter 2:11-12, Matthew 22:34-40, Ephesians 3:10-11, Mark 16:15-16)

19. **Everlasting Church:** We claim a historical connection to the indestructible church of Jesus Christ through our spiritual ancestors. Knowledge of church history is paramount to connecting previous generations to future generations. (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 4:4-6)
20. **Governing Diligently:** We expect appointed ministers to govern in proportion to their “gift” and “office,” not in fear of men’s approval, but in fear of God. Our leadership models will be derived from Scripture to authorize recognized evangelists, elders, deacons and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service, which in turn build up the body. (Romans 12:8, Ephesians 4:7-13, Acts 13:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-10, Mark 10:42-45)
21. **Servant-Based Leadership:** We charge every Christian who aspires to influence others to see themselves as “living sacrifices” entrusted with a gift, not as authority figures grasping power. The Golden Rule of Matthew 7:2 is a crucial concept in servant-based leadership. (Matthew 20:25-28, Romans 12:1-8, Acts 8:17-24)
22. **Other Fellowships, Movements and Sects:** We recognize other Christians who live by the same ‘rule of faith’ are saved; however, it may not be wise for differing groups to interrelate closely depending on other critical differences. We intend to show respect to other believers while reserving the right to protect our flock from possible harm. (Mark 9:38-41, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 11:18-19, 12:12-13, Acts 20:27-29)
23. **Lasting Love:** We commit to enduring with each other through struggles, weaknesses, and overcoming difficult sins until/unless one of us is unwilling to make progress or is particularly harmful to the body. (Luke 17:3-5, Hebrews 12:14-17, 2 Peter 3:17-18, Jude 22-23)
24. **Unity and Diversity:** We maintain the celebration of our diversity, which includes understanding and strengthening neglected segments of our fellowship and reaching out to overlooked portions of our population. (Acts 2:1-13, 6:1-7)
25. **Kingdom of God:** We believe that God’s will is ultimately proclaimed through Jesus’ preaching on the kingdom coming to earth. We also acknowledge that the Kingdom is greater than our human descriptions; recognizing that Jesus used many parables to describe what “the kingdom is like”.

These twenty-five statements of core doctrine, practical theology and spiritual commitments have become more of a statement of intent than anything else — **NOT** a creed, list of rules, or a statement of faith. Some of these values may be disputable, but if we practice the “one another” commands of Jesus we can sort out our differences or even live peaceably within them. Of course, this list is incomplete and will always be a draft. We still have much work to do to collectively understand other concepts: our individual spiritual gifts, the role of the Spirit, our celebration of worship and other important elements of our faith.

We trust our church knows how to review our values in light of the Bible and not the other way around (Acts 17:11). It is the constant review of our faith that will help us stay like the new wineskins of the parable. As we move forward together as a church, let us remember that learning is an adventure, changing is what keeps us alive and repentance is refreshing.¹

¹ Most [if not all] of the following statements were adapted and modified from the statements made to the Chicago Church of Christ.

Date

Progress Notes

Class 2: Discipleship

It is imperative that every disciple of Jesus set an intention to keep Jesus as Lord of their lives. This includes seeking spiritual transformation in the following three areas:

1. GREAT COMMANDMENT

Mark 12:30-31 (NIV) ³⁰“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” ³¹The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’”

Set a daily appointment with God and make every effort to treat it as the most important appointment in your day. **Set** this time with God so you will not be interrupted and/or distracted. **Set** this time where you can be mentally alert.

- **Psalms 42:1-2 (NIV)** ¹As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
- **Colossians 3:1-3 (NIV)** ¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.
- **1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)** ⁸Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

During your appointment with God, spend time praying to God about yourself, your family, authorities, church leadership, and persons to whom you want to share the gospel. During your appointment with God, study your Bible.

- **2 Timothy 2:15 (NIV)** ¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.
- **2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)** ⁵Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?

2. GREAT COMMISSION

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

As disciples we are commissioned to those inside and outside the church. Commissioning inside the church is called ‘fellowship’, and commissioning outside the church is called ‘evangelism’.

- Be active in sharing your faith (Philemon 6), so you will know God better.
- Ask not what the church can do for you; rather ask what you can do for the church. The more you engage the church, the more the church will engage you. Christians are called to fellowship (Acts 2:42, 1 Cor 12:12ff).
- Be willing to serve *behind the scenes* rather than in the *lime light*.
- Share your personal story, just like the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-21; 26:1-32)

3. GREAT COMPASSION

Matthew 25:37-40 (NIV) ³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?’ ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?’ ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

- Spiritual transformation occurs each time we encounter Jesus Christ. One of the main ways we continually encounter Jesus Christ is among the “least of these”. (Matthew 25)
- The two men on the road to Emmaus were transformed after encountering Jesus all over again. (Luke 24:13-35)

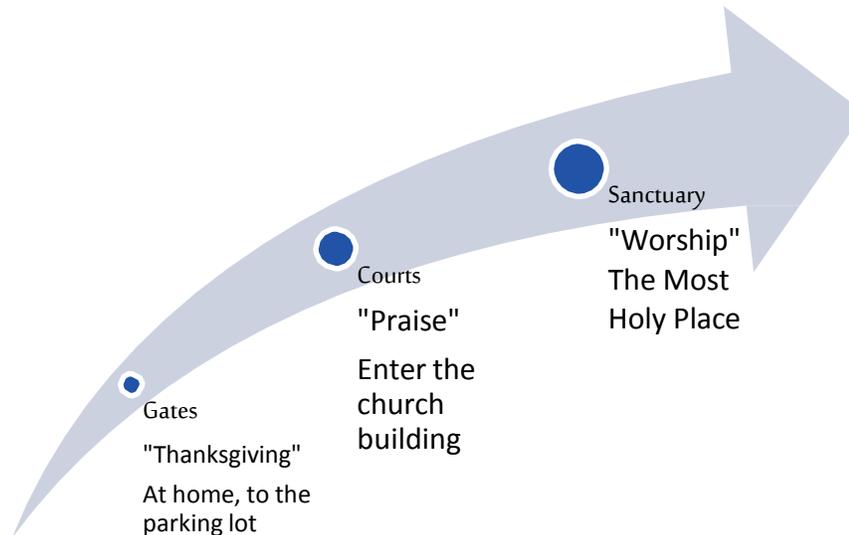
Date

Progress Notes

Class 3: Worship: Praising God

¹ Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. ² Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. ³ Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:1-5 (NIV)



Since we are called to enter God's gates with thanksgiving, this means that we cannot wait until corporate church worship begins to engage God. Worship can first begin at home. Before coming to worship on Sunday mornings [and any other corporate worship] do the following:

1. **Get plenty of rest the night before.** (1 Peter 5:8)
2. **Get up early enough to have your private devotional time with God** (Mark 1:35; Psalm 42:1)
3. **Plan enough time to arrive at church in a timely-manner** like you would in seeing a movie, attending a sporting event, and/or showing up for your job.

Luke 13:23-30 (NIV) ²³ Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, ²⁴ "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' ²⁶ "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' ²⁸ "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹ People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

4. **Come to church with a humble attitude** (Philippians 2:1-18). This is a great text to read prior to arriving to worship God; with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Why do we praise and worship God?

- **Revelation 4:11 (NIV)** ¹¹“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

Why is our praise and worship audible to God?

- **Psalm 103:1 (NIV)** ¹Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- **Psalm 66:8 (NIV)** ⁸Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard;
- **Psalm 34:1 (NIV)** ¹I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

Why do we sing?

- **Psalm 81:1 (NIV)** ¹Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob!
- **Psalm 100:2 (NIV)** ²Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.
- **Psalm 96:1 (NIV)** ¹Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- **Ephesians 5:18-19 (NIV)** ¹⁸Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
- **Colossians 3:16 (NIV)** ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Why do we stand when we sing?

- **2 Chronicles 20:19 (NIV)** ¹⁹Then some Levites from the Kohathites and Korahites stood up and praised the Lord, the God of Israel, with very loud voice.

Why do we use musical instruments?

- **Psalm 150:1-6 (NIV)**
¹Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.
²Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute,
⁵praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

Why do we clap our hands?

- **Psalm 47:1 (NIV)** ¹Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Why do we lift our hands in worship?

- **Psalm 134:2 (NIV)** ²Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord.
- **Psalm 143:6 (NIV)** ⁶I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Selah
- **1 Timothy 2:8 (NIV)** ⁸I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.
- **Psalm 63:4 (NIV)** ⁴I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

Why do we worship God in this manner?

- **John 4:23-24 (NIV)** ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Books to bring to church worship



1. *The 'Good Book'—Bible*

- **Hebrews 4:12-13 (NIV)** ¹² For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

2. *Notebook—Take notes from sermons and lessons to study and apply later.*

- **Exodus 34:27 (NIV)** ²⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."
- **Habakkuk 2:2 (NIV)** ² Then the Lord replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it."
- **Deuteronomy 31:19 (NIV)** ¹⁹ Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them.

3. *Checkbook—Give tithes and offerings*

- **Malachi 3:8 (NIV)** ⁸ "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings."



- **2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NIV)** Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

4. *Book of Life—Confidence and assurance based upon God's grace.*

- **Luke 10:19-20 (NIV)** ¹⁹ I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰ However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."



Date

Progress Notes

Class 4: Stewardship: God's Financial Plan

While the OT does consistently teach that God's people should tithe [give 10%], there is no New Testament teaching to do so. We are simply commanded to give in proportion to our income.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (NIV) ¹ Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.



So, we see there is no minimum obligation; likewise, there is no maximum obligation as well.

- Ultimately tithes and offerings are about our financial well-being and our faith in God. Jesus spoke more about money issues than anything else in the Gospels. Although the New Testament does tell us about Jesus and money, it does not reveal whether or not He carried any Himself. We are told that Judas carried the moneybag for the group of disciples (John 12:5). So, Jesus delegated that responsibility to others in the band that traveled with Him, and they bought the bread that was needed for themselves and Jesus.
- However, Jesus recognized the importance of money and the proper use of it, and He spoke of that principle many times. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking what he could do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all he had, and the young man went away sorrowing (Luke 18:18-23). Jesus used this incident to state, *"How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* Those who heard this asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus replied, *"What is impossible with men is possible with God."* (Luke 18:24-27, NIV). It is possible with God; for we know that a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea gave his tomb for Jesus to be laid in (Matthew 27:57).
- The position of Jesus and money in regards to taxes and giving to God is also made clear through Jesus' teaching. When the Pharisees tried to tempt Jesus to speak out against Rome, Jesus gave them a principle that holds true today; He said to them, *"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"* (Matthew 22:21, NIV). In other words, be subject to the powers over you (Romans 13:1-7) and pay taxes or tribute, as it is required. At another time, God supplied the money for Jesus' tribute or tax through the mouth of a fish (Matthew 17:24-27).
- Jesus also gave a parable about the correct stewardship of money in Matthew 25:14-30. Two of the servants who received their master's talents were wise stewards, gaining more from what they had been given, and were thus rewarded. The one foolish servant, who misused the master's talents, lost that talent and his reward. The principle is that all that we have belongs to the LORD and how we use it, as wise and good stewards will determine rewards. These "talents" are inclusive of all of the details of our lives: time, money, relationships, and gifts. All we have is by the grace of God and being a wise servant who does all to the glory of God is our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1, KJV).
- Jesus' teaching on the details of life, which includes money, was that God would provide for all of the believer's needs. *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* (Matthew 6:33, NIV). This truth is certainly illustrated by the widow's two mites (Mark 12:42). Whereas she gave to God all that she had, there were the rich who cast into the temple treasury from their abundance just for the show of it. The lesson that Jesus gave in all this was that the widow gave more than all of the others. The implication here is that she gave her all to God and trusted Him to supply her need.

Four Reasons Why We Give:

1. Support the ministry/staff leadership (Luke 10:7; Gal 6:6; 1 Cor 9:4-14; 1 Tim 5: 17-18)
2. Give to the poor and needy (Prov 14:31, 19:17, 21:13; James 1:27, 2:14-24; 1 Tim 6:17-19; 1 John 3:17-19)
3. Support missionary efforts (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 13:2; 2 Cor 8-9)

4. Support facilities (e.g., auditorium rental) and equipment

Lastly, we are also commanded to leave no debt outstanding (Romans 13:8). Many Christians, who have the heart to give spiritually and sacrificially, cannot do so because of poor money management. In cases like this, we recommend setting up a plan to get your financial house in order. [See church leadership for help]. We may from time to time, request a voluntary financial pledge from our membership. The purpose is to plan and budget for future periods.

Class 5: Fellowship: Connecting With Others; Being Part of a Small Group

At The Bridge Church, we believe in the importance of large worship gatherings and small missional communities. We believe in the effectiveness of public worship and private connection. We also recognize the need for discipleship in each of our lives because God has called us to be and to make disciples. Our BRIDGE Groups are a great place to train, to be trained and to make disciples.

We've all seen basketball or football teams gather in a huddle to develop a game plan. Athletes know they can't win the game alone but it will take a team effort. We need people on our team that will study God's Word with us, pray with us, and hold us accountable so that we can live in obedience to God's Word. That is why we encourage you to consider joining a BRIDGE group.

BRIDGE Groups are our "bridge" to the communities throughout metropolitan Baton Rouge.

BRIDGE Groups Defined

B = Bible Study

R = Relationships

I = Intentional Service

D = Discipleship

G = Generosity

E = Encouragement

- The goal of each BRIDGE group is to live our mission together. Being a part of a BRIDGE group on a mission is much more comprehensive and meaningful than merely being a group that attends events together. It's about being both ORGANIZED and ORGANIC to the demographics and geographics of each group.
- BRIDGE is our acronym for engaging God's mission, as stated in The Bridge Church's purpose statement

BRIDGE Group ~~Member~~ Investor Responsibilities

Every member is an investor in their respective group. It's your group. To keep things simple, there are two responsibilities for investors:

1. **Be present.** Each owner is encouraged to be together whenever the group is together. As the scriptures teach, "And let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let's encourage one another –and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb 10:25).
2. **Be a friend, bring a friend.** What can be more encouraging than helping bridge people to God and to one another?

Date

Progress Notes

Class 6: Leadership: Biblical Leadership & Authority

Although the heart of leadership according to Scripture is servanthood and not lording over people (Mark 10:42-45), the Bible also teaches that legitimate leaders have authority to direct others. This authority comes from God and is delegated to leaders for the good of the church. The following verses reflect the clear teaching that leaders should be respected and obeyed when operating within their legitimate sphere of authority:

- **1 Cor. 16:15-18** “ You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. . . Such men deserve recognition.”
- **1 Thes. 5:12-13** “Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.”
- **Titus 2:15** [Speaking to a leader] “These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.”
- **Heb. 13:7** “ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.”
- **Heb. 13:17** “ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Leadership Team

The ecclesiastical leadership of the Bridge consists of the congregational ministry staff. The ministry staff includes both full-time and laity-driven staff.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors are made of reliable men and/or women from the congregation. Their primary responsibility to the church is financial and administrative oversight.

Ministerial Teams

The Bridge has a number of ministries within the church to meet needs both inside and outside the church. Each ministry of the church is led by a ministerial team.

Small Group Leadership (Bridge Groups)

The Bridge is comprised of small groups to best meet the needs of the church members. Geographically, our congregation extends across the Greater Baton Rouge area to include East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Ascension and Livingston parishes. The Bible teaches that Christians should be devoted to the Word of God, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer. In addition, Christians are called to enjoy the favor of one another, ensuring that spiritual, emotional and physical needs are met. We believe that this holistic caring for one another is best served in community rather than in isolation and/or a larger context; where people simply can *slip through the cracks*. As a result, we encourage all members to be part of a small group. Here is a list of our Bridge Groups and their respective organizers:

Church Guidelines

To ensure that reverence is maintained in the auditorium and on the church premises, we request that you:

- Do not chew gum, eat, or drink in the auditorium.
- Do not litter in the auditorium.
- Do not talk unnecessarily prior to or during the worship service.
- Do not allow your child(ren) to run or play in the auditorium, or play with or on the musical instruments.

To ensure that all things are conducted decently and in order during worship service and on the church premises, we kindly request that you:

- Follow the directions of the hospitality team and ushers.
- All church announcements must be submitted to the Sunday Producer NLT Wednesday at 4 p.m. for approval. At the discretion of the Ecclesiastical Leadership, announcements will then be placed on the website, church programs, and/or announced during worship service.
- Do not stand and give announcements in the worship service. All announcements must be written and submitted to a member of the hospitality team, who will in turn, submit them to the appropriate ministry staff personnel for approval.
- Do not solicit or sell anything on the church premises unless you have been authorized by the Leadership Team.
- There will be no form of "pan-handling" on the church property; to include inside the building and the church property. We have other means of addressing a person's physical needs.

To avoid unnecessary distractions during worship, we request that you:

- Please take crying baby or noisy child out of the worship service. A member of the hospitality team will assist you.
- Please give the "right-away" for those who have physical disabilities.
- Please silence your cell phones.



To best have your needs served by the Leadership Team, we request the following:

- In terms of setting up an appointment, please send a request to the Leadership's email addresses.
- Please do not give out the Minister's mobile phone number without their prior approval. Feel free to use the Church phone number.
- Please attempt to get your most immediate needs met through the Ministry Leader most associated to your current need.

Please print when completing the following information for church records: (for office use only)

Personal Information

Prefix:

Mr. Mrs. Ms. Other _____

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Primary Phone _____ Additional Phone _____
 work home mobile work home mobile

Occupation _____ E-mail _____

Birthdate _____

Family Information

Spouse First Name _____ Spouse Birthdate _____

Child/Children's Names and Birthdates (month/day/year):

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birthdate</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

If you were a member of another ICOC congregation, please provide name: _____

Group Leader(s): _____

Weekly Tithe/Contribution Amount: _____

(For budgeting purposes only)

Date

Progress Notes

Bible Study Series



The following Bible study series is designed to....

- 1) **Recognize Divine Authority:** In any and every Bible student environment; whether it is individual study, group study, and or church study—God is the ultimate authority.
- 2) **Define Personal Responsibility:** While there are many solid, biblical texts addressed during this study series, the primary emphasis will be placed upon the individual studying the Bible to be serious and engaged. The Bible clearly teaches that every Christian must assume personal responsibility for their spiritual development. We are taught to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2), to examine and test ourselves to determine if we are in the faith (2 Cor 13:5), and to do our best to present ourselves to God as one approved; someone who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). In addition, Christians are called to put into practice the things we are learning (Luke 6:46-49, James 1:22-25). For these reasons, every student will have questions to consider, further readings, and homework to pursue prior to the next study. It will be vital.
- 3) **Establish Mutual Accountability:** During this study series, there inherently will be someone teaching and at least one person learning. While this may be the predominant study scenario, we ultimately know that we are all disciples of Jesus (learners) every time we encounter the text. The Bible says that teachers are held more accountable (James 3:1).

Study 1: Spiritual Journey

The goals of this study are the following:

1. To affirm that God has been working in the lives of all human beings.
2. To embrace the power of story-telling as a process of connecting through mutual dialogue. This study is an opportunity to be active in sharing your faith (Philemon 6).
3. To create a narrative framework to support the facilitation of future Bible study.

Study the spiritual journey of the Apostle Paul

Acts 9:1-31 Saul's Conversion

- The story of Saul begins in Acts 9; where Saul is against God's movement. In short, God can use anybody.
- Verse 3: we are all on a journey [for Jesus as disciple or against Jesus]
- Jesus sent Paul to Ananias to "*be told what to do*". How did Ananias help Saul?
- Saul was obedient to the instructions from Jesus
- He fasted and prayed for 3 days; which means this was a very spiritual event for him. He took this calling very seriously.

Acts 22:1-21 Saul's Re-telling of his Conversion

- Some years later, Paul has now embraced his "story" as being called by God; certainly not his thoughts in Acts 9.
- Notice how Paul has now added his natural birth and spiritual, theological training to his story.
- Paul also affirms that he was "against" Jesus in his former life
- His new life is evidenced by his "new name" [Saul to Paul]
- Paul affirms the role of Ananias in his life and conversion [Acts 22:12-13]

Acts 25:23—26:32 Saul's Re-telling of his Conversion to King Agrippa

- Now Paul has fully embraced his "story" by confirmation of God working in his life and ministry.
- Notice his confidence in speaking with King Agrippa [Acts 26].
- Paul clearly wants to persuade everyone to become a Christian.
- Paul can confidently ask people to become "like him". Do you feel like you can confidently ask people to become like you [as Christian]?

Note: Make a list of everything Saul (Paul) did on the way to salvation.

- Saw a light
- Heard the voice of Jesus
- Believed in Jesus
- Confessed Jesus as Lord
- Obeyed Jesus' command
- Fasted three days
- Prayed three days
- Had a vision
- Received a miracle
- Got baptized

Question[s] to Consider:

- What does Revelation 12:10-12 say about experiencing victory?
- How does your spiritual journey compare and/or contrast to the journey we just explored?
- How have you experienced God's presence in your life up this point in time?

HOMework

Who is Jesus? -- **Matthew 16:13-**

16

- Jesus identity was debated in his day, and is still debated today.

Jesus was both human and divine.-- **John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1-4**

- Jesus is speaking as "the Word" and was with God in the beginning, but more that he "was God." All creation was accomplished through him, and he brought the light of God into the darkness. Jesus spoke the very words of God.
- Jesus was also fully human. He could be heard, seen and touched. His followers walked with him, and their message was about all they experienced of his very human life.

Jesus was a revolutionary teacher.-- **Matthew 7: 24-29**

- Jesus' teachings set him apart, and those who heard him were often amazed! He taught unlike anyone else because he taught with authority.
- Jesus taught on purity [Matthew 5:27-30], loving your enemies [Matthew 5:43-45], and the love of money [Matthew 6:24].

Jesus drew all kinds of people to himself—**John 4:4-9**

- According to prejudices of Jesus' day, he should not have been in Samaria, and he certainly should not have been talking to the Samaritan woman. Jesus loved those who many considered unlovable, and he drew people of all kinds to himself.
- Jesus welcomed and spent his time with children, lepers and social outcasts such as the Samaritans and tax collectors. He was often ridiculed for the time he spent with "sinners." Jess drew all kinds of people to himself, and he is drawing you!

Jesus loved beyond measure.—**John 13:1-5; 34-35**

- Washing feet was a humble act of service, a dirty job reserved for lowly household servants. Jesus humbled himself greatly by doing this for his disciples.
- Jesus taught a new standard to love by his actions and called us to that same love.

Jesus called people to follow him.—**Matthew 4:18-22**

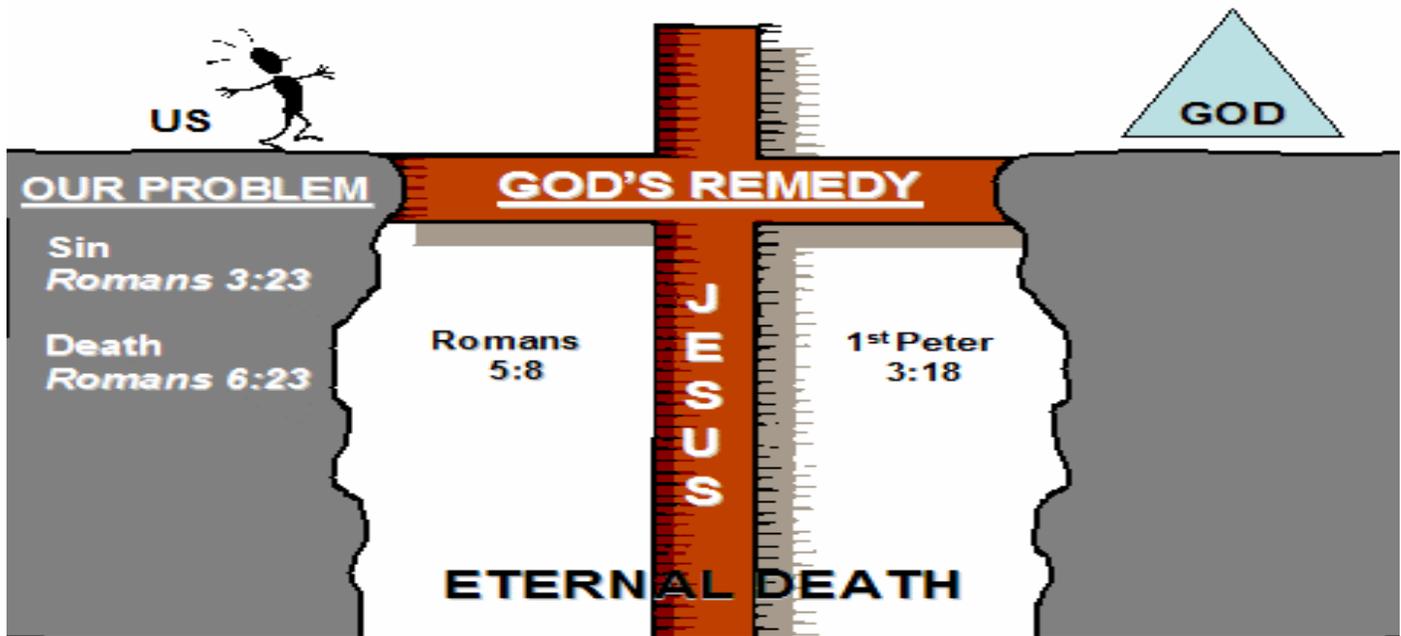
- Jesus called people to follow him, walk with him, to learn from him and to imitate his life.
- Jesus's life and teachings inspired people to leave everything else behind and follow him.

Study 2: The Good News

If the spiritual journey study is done effectively, there should be a “road map” of the person’s spiritual experience with God and others. This next study intended to share the “good news” of the gospel.

This study is divided into two parts:

- 1) The Sin of Man
- 2) The Grace of God



Part 1: Sin of Man

Romans 3:21-24—The Definition of Sin

- Sin is falling short of the will of God and God’s plan for our lives.
- Everyone is guilty of sin!

Romans 6:20-23—The Wages of Sin

- Sin is detrimental and destructive to our individual lives, communities, families, friendships, organizations, etc.]
- Sin is enslaving and only leads to spiritual death [and sometimes physical death].

Mark 7:20-23—The Source of Sin

- Sin comes from within—from our own hearts. We cannot blame our sin on others and the environment.
- Jesus specifically mentions sins [as unclean].

Ephesians 4:17-19—The Damage of Sin

- Without repentance of sins our hearts will lose sensitivity to the destructive nature of sin, and our heart will grow hard. As an analogy, consider a person who gets heart disease [hardening of the arteries; sometimes accompanied by a heart attack].
- Sin eventually darkens our understanding of sin's effects. At some point, a person can lose the ability to recognize sin. Imagine how a person might experience life without recognizing sin.

Galatians 5:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; James 4:17

- This might also be a good time to share vulnerably from your own life about some of the sins you have struggled with over the years.
- **Sins of commission:** The first group is sexual type sins, the second is spiritual type sins, the third is sins of the heart or relational type sins, and the fourth are sins of indulgence.
- **Sins of omission:** Not only is it a sin to do what is wrong, but also to not do what is right.
- What are your thoughts about these Scriptures?

Redemption & Rescue from Sin—Romans 7:24-25

- The Solution, The Answer, The Help, The Remedy...is only Jesus Christ!
- Jesus redeemed us through his sacrifice on the cross.

Part 2: The Grace of God

Ephesians 2:6-8—Saved by Grace

- What is grace? Grace is undeserved, unmerited, and/or unearned favor. There is nothing good we have done to deserve to be rescued from our sins.

Titus 2:11-13—Students of God's Grace

- Grace teaches us to say "no" to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live upright.
- Understanding God's grace is the most transformative aspect of being human.

Hebrews 12:14-15—Don't Miss the Grace of God

- As Christians we must understand grace.
- As Christians, we must ensure others understand the grace of God

Matthew 26:17—27:55—God's Grace Demonstrated on the Cross

- For Paul, the Cross was the source of personal transformation. It is the message and not the methods that bring people into a saving relationship with God. At the Cross, we meet God in the most fundamentally inspiring way [Read 1 Cor 1:18-25, 1 Cor 2:1-5].
- Many people were crucified during the days of Jesus. The horrific nature of Jesus' crucifixion does not make it special for us. The power of Jesus' crucifixion is that Jesus died for humanity [you and me].

Study how Jesus suffered for us.

- 1) Emotional Suffering: Matt 26:36-56 [Jesus overwhelmed, betrayed, and deserted]
- 2) Physical Suffering: Matt 27:22-50 [Jesus was flogged, mocked, beaten, spit upon, crowned with thorns, crucified]
- 3) Spiritual Suffering: Matt 27:45-50 [Jesus felt anguish as he cried out to God, "My God, why have you forsaken me].

Questions to consider:

- Have you ever studied the crucifixion account before this study?
- Do you believe that Jesus would have died on the cross if you were the only person who needed salvation? If yes, how does that make you feel?
- How much love does God have for you since He allowed His son to die on a cross?
- Knowing that Jesus died for you...[now] what is your response?

HOMEWORK**Further Readings:**

- Isaiah 59:1-2; Isaiah 53:4-6; Jesus was punished for our sins. We are healed by his wounds.
- Isaiah 52: 14; Jesus experienced massive trauma on the cross
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; God made Jesus our sin offering on the cross.
- Philippians 2:1-11; Jesus' death was an act of great humility.
- Romans 3:21-26; Jesus' death was a sacrifice of atonement

Consider the types of sins named in Galatians 5: 19-21 and James 4:17. Take a piece of paper and write down your sins past and present. Look over them. Consider how those sins hurt you and others. Pray about repentance, and thank God for redeeming you through the cross. If you have any questions and/or concerns, write them down and prepare to discuss at the following study.

Encourage the person you are studying with to watch the *"The Passion of the Christ"*.

Study 3: The Call of Discipleship

Philippians 2:5-11—Lordship of Jesus Christ

- Summary of Jesus' life and death; culminating with the fact that he is "Lord" with every tongue praising him and every knee bowing to Jesus.
- What does it mean to serve Jesus as 'Lord'? This study is intended to demonstrate "Lordship" through discipleship.

Acts 11:25-26—Identification of Early Christians

- The name Christian was applied for the first time to disciples at Antioch about 7 years after the beginning of the church.
- The word "Christian" is used 3 times in the NT, whereas the word "discipleship" is used almost 300 times in the NT.
- In order to better understand what it means to live as a Christian today, we will start by looking at Jesus' expectations for those who would be disciples.

John 8:30-32—Jesus is Lord of Doctrine

- Doctrine simply means teachings/beliefs. True disciples hold to the teachings of Jesus above all else.
- Jesus' teachings supersede personal opinions, emotions, and traditions.

Mark 1:14-18 —Jesus is Lord of Our Purpose

- From the very beginning, Jesus' message was to call people to follow him
- Following with purpose—become a "fisher of men". What does this mean?
- The earliest disciples immediately left everything to follow Jesus!

Luke 9:23-26—Jesus is Lord of Our Priorities

- "If anyone" —Jesus call for discipleship of self-denial is for everyone.
- Discipleship by carrying the cross. What does this mean?

Luke 14:25-33—Jesus is Lord of Our Priorities

- Jesus as he relates to other relationships (v. 25-27)
- The call of discipleship should not be taken lightly! Count the cost (v.28-30), Consider the alternative (v.31-32)
- "anything" and "everything" is an all-consuming commitment and takes all we have to follow Jesus.

John 13:33-34—Jesus is Lord of Relationships

- Love is identifying mark of a disciple of Jesus. Jesus expected disciples to love like he loved.

Luke 11:1-4—Jesus is Lord of our Spirituality

- The disciples looked to Jesus for teaching on prayer.
- Prayer is transformational! It is clear from scripture that prayer is a significant part of a disciple's life.
- Mark 1:35 demonstrates Jesus' prayer life ("early in the morning")

Matthew 28:18-20—Jesus is Lord of Mission

- Jesus is Lord of our mission. Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples.
- Of all nations. What does this say about our witness/evangelism?
- Continue teaching; therefore continue learning

Questions to consider:

- Have you been following Christ? If so, how?
- What are some things you must change in order to embrace Jesus as Lord of your life?
- What spiritual disciplines/practices do you currently incorporate into your life?
- How often are you engaged in these spiritual practices?

HOMEWORK

Romans 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Cor. 3:18 (NIV) And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being **transformed** into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is a life-long process where the believer is continually being transformed into the likeness of Christ. The Scriptures below are “disciplines” that can be practiced at routine intervals [daily, weekly, monthly, annually] that help move the believer along the path of transformation.

Make a plan to incorporate some/all of these spiritual disciplines into your life.

- ❑ **Scripture Reading:** (Luke 2:41-52)
- ❑ **Silence & Solitude:** Prayer, Contemplation, Meditation (Mark 1:35, Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 6:12)
- ❑ **Service:** Hospitality, use of gifts (Mark 10:45, John 13:34-35)
- ❑ **Simplicity:** (Luke 9:58)
- ❑ **Sacrifice:** Fasting (Hebrews 10:9-10, Matthew 4:1-11)
- ❑ **Submission:** (John 5:18-37)
- ❑ **Secrecy:** (Matthew 6:1-7, Mark 4:1)

An Acronym for Lordship of Jesus Christ

L—Lord of your whole life [Romans 10:8-13]

O—Obedient to the call to die to sin; live for righteousness [1 Peter 2:21-24]

R—Reward (and cost) of following Jesus and making him Lord [Mark 10:17-31]

D—Denial of self is the lifestyle of following Jesus [Luke 9:21-27]

S—Sold out for Jesus; willing to do anything [Luke 14:25-35]

H—Helping to save the lost [Mark 1:16-20]

I—Ignoring all excuses and no looking back [Luke 9:57-62]

P—People become a priority [John 13:34-35]

Study 4: Repentance & Baptism

Acts 2:36-41 (NIV)

- When it comes to the realization of God’s saving grace on the cross, our response should be “what shall I do?”
- Peter sums of the teaching about salvation: *to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins.*

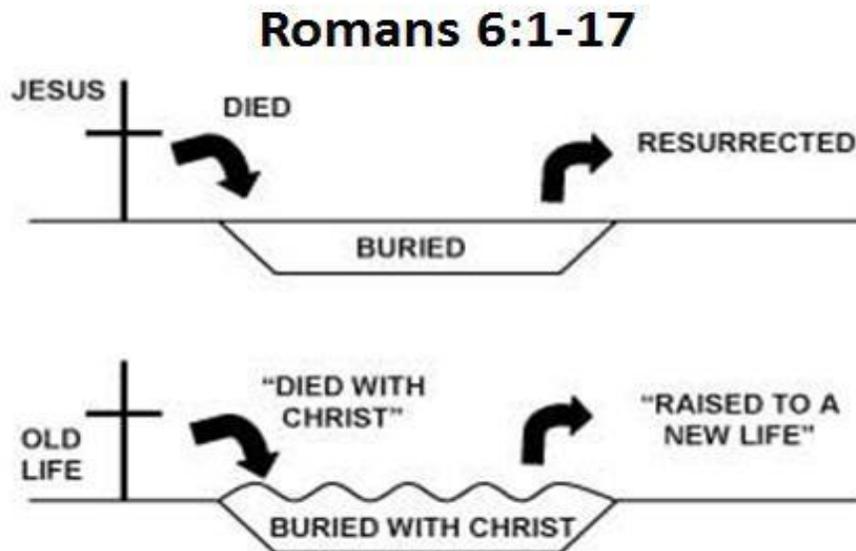
1 Peter 2:9-10

- Becoming a Christian means we move from the darkness to the light, and it results in a transformational change in our lives.

LIGHT	DARKNESS
People of God	Not a People of God
Received Mercy	No Mercy
Royal Priesthood	No Priesthood
Holy Nation	Unholy

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

- Repentance means to “change our mind”, which leads to “changed behavior”
- Difference between godly and worldly sorrow. What does godly sorrow look like?
- Called to repent [Acts 3:19; 17:30; 26:20]
- Why are we baptized into Jesus’ death? This is where the blood was shed.



Matthew 28:16-20 (Great Commission)

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

- Command: Make disciples, of all nations, baptize them, and teach them
- Promise: Jesus will be with us

1 Peter 3:18-22 (NIV)

- Baptism is not a bath--Baptism is pledge of good conscience towards God

Questions to Consider

- In the book of Acts, what was preached?
- What was the person [people's] response to the preaching?
- How long did it take for the person to respond?
- Have you ever been baptized before? If so, when and how were you baptized?
- What was the motivation for your previous baptism?

HOMEWORK

BELIEF	REPENTANCE	BAPTISM
John 3:16	2 Cor 7:8-11	Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:16
Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:16	Luke 13:1-5	Acts 2:36-38
Romans 10:8-13	Acts 2:36-38	1 Peter 3:18-20
	Acts 3:19, 17:30, 26:20	Romans 6:1-10
	Hebrews 6:1-6	Colossians 2:9-12
		Ephesians 4:4-5

Here are some additional conversion narratives found in the Book of Acts

Acts 2:38-41..... the very first believers were Jews; the start of the church at Pentecost

Acts 8:5-12.....Philip preaches in Samaria. People respond in faith by being baptized

Acts 8:26-40.....Philip teaches the Ethiopian eunuch who responds by being baptized

Acts 9:18.....the conversion of Saul [Paul]

Acts 10:47-48....Cornelius the first Gentile (God-fearer); the "Gentile Pentecost"-God shows Peter the Gospel message is not for Jews alone

Acts 16:15.....the conversion of Lydia (dealer of purple clothe) and her household

Acts 16:16-34....Paul and Silas' jailer (and his household) respond in faith and are immediately baptized

Acts 19:1-8.....Apollos, the gifted preacher.

Acts 18:8Crispus, the synagogue ruler

Acts 19:3-5.....those that had not heard yet of Jesus are baptized [not John's baptism]

Acts 22:16.....Paul's story revisited --his sins are washed away, calling on the name of the Lord in baptism

Study 5: Costs & Blessings of Following Jesus

COST TO FOLLOWING JESUS

Luke 14: 25-33

- Jesus is concerned that we count the costs of following him so we can pay the price.
- What does the parable of the tower builder suggest? What about the king?

Luke 8:11-15: Parable of the Sower

- There are a number of ways people respond to God's word. Some initially receive the word with great joy and excitement (Luke 8:13).
- Like the rocky and thorny soils, many things can prevent us from continuing in the faith.
- The key to maintaining faithfulness is to hear, retain, practice obeying the Word of God.

BLESSINGS OF FOLLOWING JESUS

Acts 2:36-47

- The forgiveness of sins...every last one! A new creation [2 Corinthians 5:14]
- The gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The power to live a new life [John 14:15-17].
- Priceless truths from God's Word—inspiration and practical direction for all aspects of our lives [Psalm 119:97-104]
- We get to worship in Spirit and Truth [John 4]
- Fellowship—incredible, loving relationships.
- Purpose in life to “seek and save the lost” [Luke 19:10]

THE CHURCH

Colossians 1:15-21; Ephesians 1:22-23

- Jesus directs and lead the body, his church.

Membership of the Church: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

- When a person is baptized into Christ, they become a member of his body, which is the church.
- It is important to be part of a healthy, spiritual body.
- Others in the body need you, and you need others in the body of Christ [12-27]

Support of the Church: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

- Your financial contributions pays for facilities, staffing, helping the poor, supplies, missions, etc.
- OT standard of giving is 10%.
- NT does not specify any specific amount, but it does live up the example of those whose “extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.”

Leadership of the Church: Ephesians 4:11-13; Hebrews 13:17, 24; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

- God's plan for the church includes leadership. Leaders play a crucial role in equipping disciples to be their best for God.
- It is important to be supportive towards ALL facets of leadership in the church.

About The Hills



Tony and Carmon Hill were married in January of 2006 after meeting at a Singles Retreat in 2004. Before coming to The Bridge Church they served as Evangelist and Women’s Ministry Leader on staff at the Atlanta Metropolitan Christian Church in Atlanta, Ga, the D.C. Regional Church in Washington, D.C. and the Atlanta Church of Christ (ACOC) at Cobb in Marietta, Ga. They have three beautiful daughters Ashlee, Zoë, and Ziva.

Carmon is a native of Greensboro, NC and graduate of North Carolina Central University in Durham, NC, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. She became a Christian in the Triangle Church Campus Ministry in October of 1999, and was a part of the mission team sent to plant the Piedmont Triad Church in Greensboro in 2003. She has served in the Campus, Pre-teens, Teens, and Singles Ministries. Her passion has been to help people with disabilities and the deaf and hard of hearing. She currently works as a Freelance American Sign Language Interpreter.

Tony is a native of Louisiana and attended Northwestern State University of Louisiana before pursuing a career in the U.S. Army. After serving in the Army he moved to Atlanta, Ga. While being previously married with a daughter and single again he became a Christian in March of 2000. Shortly after becoming a Christian he led in many capacities in the Singles Ministry throughout the ACOC and southeastern states. He also led Worship, Administration, Chemical Recovery, and Prison Ministries in Georgia. His passion has been to use his life experiences and leadership ability to reach out and encourage disciples throughout our fellowship of churches. He currently works for a Department of Defense contracted IT firm.