



Membership/ New Believer's Class

Why is church membership important?

The universal Church—the [Body of Christ](#) —is composed of all true believers in Christ, and local churches are to be a microcosm of the universal Church. As such, it is important to commit to a local church where we can give of our resources, serve others, and be accountable.

The Bible does not directly address the concept of formal church membership, but there are several passages that strongly imply its existence in the early church. “*And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved*” ([Acts 2:47](#)).

In [Acts 6:3](#), the church in Jerusalem is told to hold elections of some kind: “*Choose seven men from among you.*” The phrase *among you* suggests a group of people distinct from others who were *not* “among” them.

Church membership is also important because it helps define the [pastor's](#) responsibility. [Hebrews 13:17](#) instructs, “*Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.*” Whom will a pastor give an account for, except the members of his own church? Is he responsible for all the Christians in the world or only for those under his care? And to whose spiritual authority are you called to submit, all ministers everywhere, or to the one where you gather for worship?

Belonging to a local church body is a means through which we serve, using the gifting that God has given to each one of us. Further, as we commit to a local church, we find a like minded group of believers where we can love, serve, encourage, pray for, admonish, and rejoice with one another.

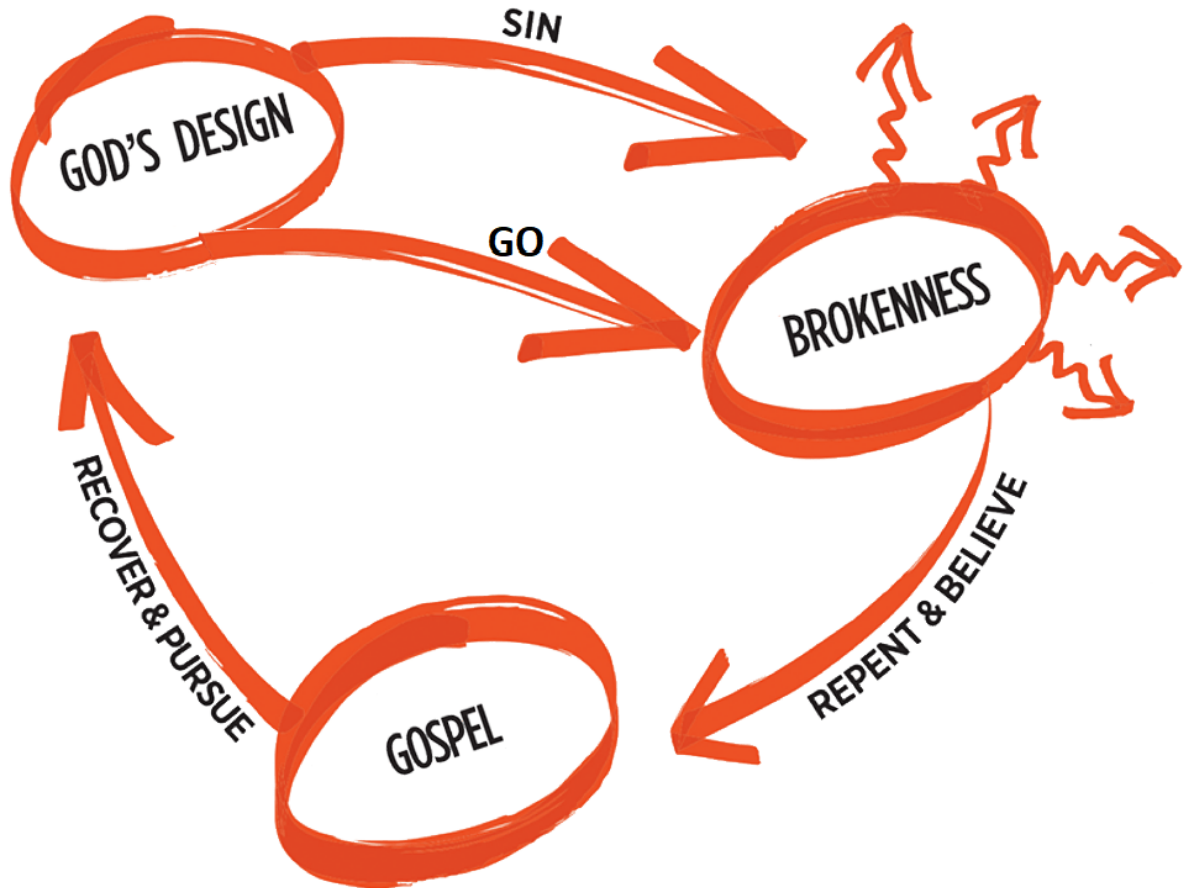
Why do we require this class for Church Membership?

In [John 17:20-23](#), Jesus prays for future believers that will place their faith in Him. As Jesus prays, He asks the Father that we will be united, just as He and the Father are united. At New Hope Baptist, we take very seriously the call to preserve and protect the unity of the church. This does not mean that we always are in agreement about everything, but it does mean that we will not be disagreeable in how we address issues. In all things, we strive to give and receive grace to one another. One of the best ways that we have found to promote unity is to make sure that everyone joining the church knows what we believe in regard to basic doctrines and church practices. We find that it is better if everyone coming in understands up front, what we believe and how we function.

(Before moving on.... Spend a few minutes briefly introducing everyone)

The Gospel

(The Good News of how you can become a Christian)



People often talk about the brokenness in the world or in their lives. Whether they realize it or not, these conversations are actually connected to the gospel. Everyone can agree that the world is broken, but this is not God's original design. **God's design is perfect** but **sin** caused brokenness.... And everyone has sinned.

(For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.- [Romans 3:23](#))

Sin is turning away from God's design and pursuing our own way. It is rebellion against God. This leads us to brokenness and eventually death.

(For the wages of sin is death..... -[Romans 6:23a](#))

People try many things to deal with or fix the brokenness they experience (those squiggly lines on the circle). We may try to numb the pain through substances. We often try to distract ourselves through entertainment. We may put our hope in things like success in education or a career. Many of us believe relationships will heal our brokenness. Many even look to religion to

help fix our brokenness by thinking if our good outweighs our bad, we can get back to God's design. But all of these are futile attempts to get out of brokenness.

But God, out of His love for us, sees our brokenness (caused by sin) and He did something about it. The only way out of brokenness is through Jesus. God sent his Son to come and rescue us out of our brokenness and bring us back to his perfect design. The death that we deserve for pursuing sin is taken by Jesus. He rose from the dead, making a way out of brokenness.

(But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – [Romans 5:8](#))

When Jesus died on the cross, he did so to take the punishment that we deserved. If we confess and turn from our sin (repent) and believe in what Jesus did for us, we can be healed from our brokenness and freed to pursue and recover God's design.

(If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. – [Romans 10:9](#))

More than that, we can go - being sent just like Jesus, back into the brokenness to tell people about Jesus and what he has done for them. Once we have been Called out and Saved from the brokenness, it is important that we **GO** back into the brokenness to tell others how they too can be saved.

(But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - [Acts 1:8](#))

How have you responded to God's Good News for dealing with the brokenness in this world?

Have you come to believe this as truth?

Tell us about when you "called on the name of the Lord".

If you have not yet turned from your sin and placed your faith in Jesus Christ, what has been holding you back?

After we come to faith in Christ.... What happens next?

Placing your faith in Jesus Christ is just the beginning. You have begun your new life... but you have much growing to do. When Jesus called the first disciples, He said to them.... *"Follow Me, and I will make you, fishers of men."* – [Mark 1:17](#)

At New Hope Baptist, we believe that Jesus' call to the first disciples is still the call for all disciples. For our purposes, *A disciple is someone that **Knows & Follows** Jesus, is being **Changed** by Jesus, and **Commits to the Mission** of Jesus.*

"Follow Me" – The disciple must first **KNOW** Jesus (respond in faith to the Gospel) before they can **FOLLOW** Jesus. As we follow Him, there are certain things that He, through His Word will lead us to do (we will talk about these in subsequent lessons)

Jesus wants us to be **assured of our salvation**. You do not have to guess about your eternal security... you can **KNOW** that you are saved. *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life"*. – [1 John 5:13](#)

Once we **KNOW** Jesus, we will want to **FOLLOW** Him. The first thing He leads us to do is to publicly identify with Him through **Baptism**.

As we **KNOW & FOLLOW** Jesus, HE will change us (into maturing Disciples)....
Jesus will lead you to develop Spiritual disciplines (Bible study, pray, give, attend church, etc...)

As we are **CHANGED by Christ**, we will **COMMIT to His MISSION** (Tell others about Him).

Once you **KNOW** Jesus, what are some of the challenges you have in learning to **FOLLOW** Him?

Why do you think that we often feel like we need to change ourselves (do the work on our own) instead of allowing Christ to make us into disciples?

We will go into more details in the following sessions, but for now, what questions do you have about studying the Bible, prayer, giving, attending church, etc...?

KNOW & FOLLOW - A disciple is one that KNOWS & FOLLOWS Jesus

How can I KNOW that I KNOW Jesus (am I saved and can I lose my salvation)?

Assurance of Salvation

When people come to know Christ as their Savior, they are brought into a relationship with God that guarantees their eternal security. Just as we trust God completely for our salvation, we also trust Him completely to keep our salvation secure.

[Jude 24](#) declares, *"To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy."*

Jesus proclaimed, *"I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" ([John 10:28-29b](#)).*

Who can separate us from the grip of both the God the Father and God the Son?

[Ephesians 4:30](#) tells us that believers are *"sealed for the day of redemption."* [John 3:15-16](#) tells us that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will *"have eternal life."* **If a person were to be promised eternal life, but then have it taken away, it was never "eternal" to begin with.**

[Romans 8:38-39](#) reminds us.... *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Our eternal security is based on God's love for those whom He has redeemed. Our eternal security is purchased by Christ, promised by the Father, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

What has happened that cannot be undone? ([1 Peter 1:23](#))

What is the basis for the guarantee of your salvation? ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#))

What does Christ promise about your safety in His care? ([John 10:27-29](#))

What is able to separate you from God's love? ([Romans 8:35-39](#))

What promise does Jesus give you? ([Hebrews 13:5](#))

For further reading: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-lose-salvation.html>

Question: "Can a Christian lose salvation?"

Answer: First, the term *Christian* must be defined. A "Christian" is not a person who has said a prayer or walked down an aisle or been raised in a Christian family. While each of these things can be a part of the Christian experience, they are not what makes a Christian. A Christian is a person who has fully trusted in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and therefore possesses the Holy Spirit ([John 3:16](#); [Acts 16:31](#); [Ephesians 2:8-9](#)).

- So, with this definition in mind, can a Christian lose salvation? It's a crucially important question. Perhaps the best way to answer it is to examine what the Bible says occurs at salvation and to study what losing salvation would entail:
- A Christian is a new creation. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). A Christian is not simply an "improved" version of a person; a Christian is an entirely new creature. He is "in Christ." For a Christian to lose salvation, the new creation would have to be destroyed.
- A Christian is redeemed. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" ([1 Peter 1:18-19](#)). The word *redeemed* refers to a purchase being made, a price being paid. We were purchased at the cost of Christ's death. For a Christian to lose salvation, God Himself would have to revoke His purchase of the individual for whom He paid with the precious blood of Christ.
- A Christian is justified. "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" ([Romans 5:1](#)). To justify is to declare righteous. All those who receive Jesus as Savior are "declared righteous" by God. For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to go back on His Word and "un-declare" what He had previously declared. Those absolved of guilt would have to be tried again and found guilty. God would have to reverse the sentence handed down from the divine bench.
- A Christian is promised eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" ([John 3:16](#)). Eternal life is the promise of spending forever in heaven with God. God promises, "Believe and you will have eternal life." For a Christian to lose salvation, *eternal life* would have to be redefined. The Christian is promised to live forever. Does *eternal* not mean "eternal"?
- A Christian is marked by God and sealed by the Spirit. "You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory" ([Ephesians 1:13-14](#)). At the moment of faith, the new Christian is marked and sealed with the Spirit, who was promised to act as a deposit to *guarantee* the heavenly inheritance. The end result is that God's glory is praised. For a Christian to lose salvation, God would have to erase the mark,

withdraw the Spirit, cancel the deposit, break His promise, revoke the guarantee, keep the inheritance, forego the praise, and lessen His glory.

- A Christian is guaranteed glorification. “Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” ([Romans 8:30](#)).

According to [Romans 5:1](#), justification is ours at the moment of faith. According to [Romans 8:30](#), glorification comes with justification. All those whom God justifies are promised to be glorified. This promise will be fulfilled when Christians receive their perfect resurrection bodies in heaven. If a Christian can lose salvation, then [Romans 8:30](#) is in error, because God could not guarantee glorification for all those whom He predestines, calls, and justifies.

- A Christian cannot lose salvation. Most, if not all, of what the Bible says happens to us when we receive Christ would be invalidated if salvation could be lost. Salvation is the gift of God, and God’s gifts are “irrevocable” ([Romans 11:29](#)). A Christian cannot be un-newly created. The redeemed cannot be unpurchased. Eternal life cannot be temporary. God cannot renege on His Word. Scripture says that God cannot lie ([Titus 1:2](#)).

Two common objections to the belief that a Christian cannot lose salvation concern these experiential issues: 1) What about Christians who live in a sinful, unrepentant lifestyle? 2) What about Christians who reject the faith and deny Christ? The problem with these objections is the assumption that everyone who calls himself a “Christian” has actually been born again. The Bible declares that a true Christian will *not* live a state of continual, unrepentant sin ([1 John 3:6](#)). The Bible also says that anyone who departs the faith is demonstrating that he was never truly a Christian ([1 John 2:19](#)). He may have been religious, he may have put on a good show, but he was never born again by the power of God. “By their fruit you will recognize them” ([Matthew 7:16](#)). The redeemed of God belong “to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God” ([Romans 7:4](#)).

Nothing can separate a child of God from the Father’s love ([Romans 8:38-39](#)). Nothing can remove a Christian from God’s hand ([John 10:28-29](#)). God guarantees eternal life and maintains the salvation He has given us. The Good Shepherd searches for the lost sheep, and, “when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home” ([Luke 15:5-6](#)). The lamb is found, and the Shepherd gladly bears the burden; our Lord takes full responsibility for bringing the lost one safely home.

[Jude 24-25](#) further emphasizes the goodness and faithfulness of our Savior: “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.”

The Call to FOLLOW Jesus is a call to obedience

BAPTISM

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

An ordinance is a visible expression of the Gospel that was given to the church by Jesus (Baptism & the Lord's Supper).

The first step of Christian obedience is baptism.... Always. While baptism is not a requirement for salvation, it is a requirement for obedience. ([Acts 2:38](#), *Repent and be baptized*) ([Acts 2:41](#), *Those who accepted his message were baptized*). Paul simply assumes that all believers in the church in Rome had been baptized.... ([Romans 6:3](#) *Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?*).

Why is biblical baptism a requirement for church membership?

It is true, the bible does not explicitly say that baptism is a requirement for church membership, but obedience to and identification with Jesus is a requirement. Baptism is the first thing Jesus commands his disciples to do when making disciples ([Matthew 28:19](#)). A refusal to be baptized is inconsistent with a life of repentance and obedience to Jesus. **In many ways, baptism is the easiest command Jesus has given us to follow. It only gets more difficult from there.**

The Lord's Supper - If baptism is the visible expression of belonging to Christ, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing reminder of our position in the body of Christ. In regard to the Lord's Supper, New Hope Baptist invites all believers in Jesus Christ who have been scripturally baptized and are members in good standing of an SBC church (or a church of like faith and order) to participate in the Lord's Supper by partaking of the elements. We believe the Lord's Supper is reserved only for those that have Professed Faith in Jesus Christ, have publicly identified with Jesus through Scriptural baptism, and are walking in obedience to Jesus as a member of a local body of believers.

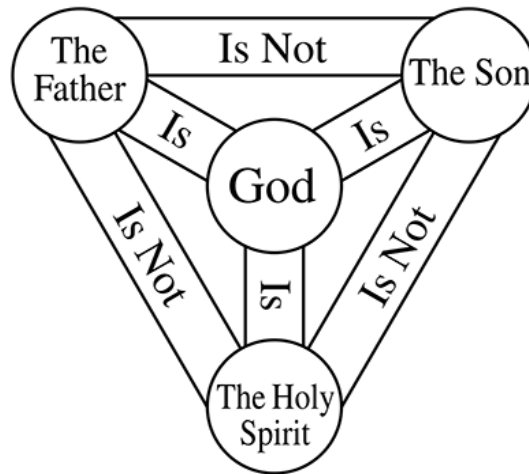
Does baptism save a person? ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))

Does baptism wash away our sins? ([1 John 1:7](#))

What does baptism symbolize? ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#); [Romans 6:4](#))

If baptism is not a requirement for salvation, why should a believer be baptized? ([John 14:15](#))

THE HOLY SPIRIT



16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. [John 14:16-17](#))

Before Christ ascended into heaven, He commanded His followers to go into the world and make disciples. Jesus wanted to use them to advance His kingdom. Knowing that He was giving them an impossible task, He sent them the Holy Spirit.

(Read [Acts 1:8; 2:1-4](#), [Ephesians 3:14-20](#) and [John 16:7-14](#))

In Acts, we see the event of God moving into man and the power that He brings. **In Ephesians**, we see Paul praying that God's people be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, **in John**, we see Jesus casting the vision of why He's sending the Spirit, not as a consolation prize, but as a strategic and necessary part of the furthering of His plan.

When/How do I receive the Holy Spirit?

Read [Romans 8:9](#) and [Ephesians 1:13-14](#)

Romans 8:9 tells us that if a person does not have the Spirit, he does not belong to Christ. The possession of the Spirit is an identifying evidence of the possession of salvation. Further, the Holy Spirit could not be the "seal of salvation" (Ephesians 1:13-14) if He is not received at the moment of salvation. Scriptures teach that our salvation is secured the moment we receive Christ as Savior.

This discussion is controversial because the *ministries* of the Holy Spirit are often confused. The *receiving/indwelling* of the Spirit occurs at the moment of salvation. The *filling* of the Spirit is an ongoing process in the Christian life.

What does the Holy Spirit do?

Read [Titus 3:5](#), [John 16:7-11](#), [Romans 8:9-11](#)

What does the Holy Spirit accomplish at salvation?

Read [John 14:26](#), [Ephesians 1:13](#); [Ephesians 4:30](#); and [Romans 8:26](#)

According to these verses, what does the Holy Spirit do in the life of the believer?

Read [1 Corinthians 2:10-13](#), [Galatians 5:16-26](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#)

How does the Holy Spirit help us accomplish the work of God?

The Bible

The Bible was written by men inspired by God and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. All Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation (This means that the bible is not about us.... It is all about Jesus).

In the front of most bibles is a listing of the books of the bible. It is helpful to turn to this page when trying to locate a certain book of the bible. The bible is divided into two main sections: The Old and the New Testaments. Books included in the Old Testament relate to the times and events prior to the time of Jesus' birth. Books included in the New Testament relate to the times and events concerning Jesus' birth, life, death & resurrection, as well as the spread of the gospel through the early church. There are 66 books of the bible, each divided into chapters and verses (ex. Genesis 2:7 Genesis- book, 2- chapter, 7-verse).

How do I choose a Translation of the Bible?

As a general rule, most modern translations are good to use, it just depends on your preference and purpose in study. Most modern translations fall into one of three primary methods of translation.

The **literal** approach seeks to render the original Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic into English as directly as possible. This is a valuable way to translate the Scriptures, except that occasionally this approach can miss the meaning of an idiom or changes in language by rendering it so precisely. (If I tell a Hispanic congregation that it is "raining cats and dogs outside" and my translator tells them that "cats and dogs are falling out of the sky," he has rendered my words literally but missed their meaning.) Examples of the literal approach include: the New American Standard Bible, the King James Version, and the English Standard Version.

The **free** approach, by contrast, seeks to translate the ideas of Scripture into English but takes liberties with the literal words as necessary. Sometimes called a "paraphrase," this approach is a

good way to understand the sense of the Bible but will not always give you the meaning of the words themselves. Examples include: The Message and the Living Bible.

The **dynamic equivalence** approach takes the middle road, seeking to translate the Bible as literally as possible but rendering idioms into English in a “free” manner when necessary. The New International Version (NIV) is the most popular example of this method. At New Hope, the pastor normally will preach out of the NIV, however almost all of the modern translations will do a good job of helping you study God’s Word.

How is the bible different from any other book? ([2 Peter 1:20-21](#))

What does [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) tell us about all of the bible? What is it useful for?

How is God’s Word helpful in our daily lives? ([Psalm 119:105](#))

What should be our attitude as we study God’s Word? ([Acts 17:11](#) & [Psalm 1:2](#))

Why should we study the bible? ([1 Peter 2:2](#) & [2 Timothy 2:15](#))

Does the Word of God change with time & culture? ([1 Peter 1:23-25](#))

Prayer

There is no magical formula for [prayer](#). In the simplest of terms, prayer is staying in communication with God—talking to Him, spending time in His presence, and drawing near to Him. Through prayer, we express adoration and thanks to God, we make requests known to Him, we pray on behalf of others, and we learn more about His character and His will. Prayer can be audible or silent, private or public, formal or informal.

The foundation of prayer that works is a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus told us to pray [in His name](#) (see [John 16:23–24](#)). Praying in Jesus’ name is not simply a magical formula that we add to the end of a prayer. It means that when we pray, we do so in His authority, on the basis of our relationship with Him, for what would most honor and glorify God.

Effective prayer must be offered in faith ([James 1:5–7](#)). Part of praying in faith, Jesus taught, is that we persevere in prayer and never give up ([Luke 18:1](#)). Prayer is relational. It is not meant to be forced but, rather, to flow comfortably from the heart since God knows our hearts ([Psalm 44:21](#); [Luke 16:15](#); [Acts 15:8](#); [Romans 8:27](#)).

Jesus taught the disciples that, through prayer, they could come to God to meet their daily needs: *“Give us today our daily bread”* ([Matthew 6:11](#)).

Prayer also involves searching our hearts, recognizing that we need God’s forgiveness, and confessing our sins: *“And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us”* ([Matthew 6:12](#)). Just as our Father graciously forgives us, we are to forgive those who wrong us ([Ephesians 4:32](#)).

Jesus also taught that prayer is an opportunity to receive strength from God to resist the enemy’s temptations: *“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”* ([Matthew 6:13](#); & [26:41](#)). Prayer keeps us tuned into the Holy Spirit’s power and guidance to resist temptation and overcome sin.

The most basic definition of prayer is “talking to God.” Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is direct access to God. It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul.

Paul wrote, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* ([Philippians 4:6–7](#)).

The Church

The New Testament speaks of the church (Universal) as the Body of Christ which includes all believers throughout all the ages, from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Upon His return, Jesus Christ will gather the Church Universal to be with Him. Until that time, the bible also speaks about the Local church.

In the New Testament, the local church (gathering of believers) is identified as an autonomous (self-governing under the authority of Jesus) congregation of baptized believers, committed to one another in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ (Baptism & 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 ends of the earth.

Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ (in prayerful submission to the Holy Spirit), 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.

At New Hope Baptist, we identify as members of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The SBC is not a denomination, with a "Top-Down" authority structure. Instead, the SBC consists of churches (about 48,000 of them) that are individually autonomous and responsible to the Lord; yet are voluntarily cooperative for the advancement of God's Kingdom. The primary way we work together is through something called the "**Cooperative Program**". Essentially, we believe that we can do more for the Kingdom through working together than we can alone. At New Hope, we send joyfully 10% of our tithes to the Cooperative Program to help fund Great Commission ministries across the world. We will highlight one of our Cooperative Program ministries each week in our "Missions Moment" segment of the worship service.

Who established the church? ([Matt. 16:18](#))

Who is the head of the church? ([Ephesians 5:23](#))

With what did Jesus purchase the church? ([Acts 20:28](#))

In [Ephesians 5:21-30](#), the relationship between Christ and the Church is compared to what relationship? From this passage, what is Christ' attitude toward the church? (v. 25-27)

In what way should this impact your attitude toward the church (should we have a lower view of the church than Jesus)?

What is my responsibility in regard to regular church attendance? ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#))

What does Paul teach in [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#) about the function, make-up, and unity of the church?

Are any “parts” of the church body unimportant?

Have you given any thought as to what “part or function” within the body that you may have?

Read [Ephesians 4:11-13](#). God equips believers for service by giving them what? In what ways do you believe that God has “gifted” you for service?

What are the main responsibilities of the pastor of the church? ([Jeremiah 3:15](#), [Ephesians 4:11-12](#), [2 Timothy 4:1-2](#), [Acts 6:2-4](#))

What does [Acts 6:2-4](#) also imply about the role of deacons within the church?

What should be my attitude toward my pastor? ([1 Thessalonians 5:12-13](#))

Giving/ Tithing in my church

The apostle Paul frequently taught the early church about giving. Jesus taught His disciples to give, as well. But neither Paul nor Jesus nor any other passage in the New Testament compels believers to tithe. Tithing is an Old Testament requirement for Israel to provide the Lord with one tenth of one's income (the word *tithe* means "tenth"). While not demanding a tenth, the New Testament does present several principles to help us decide how much to give to the Lord.

The first New Testament principle of giving is to give regularly, as Paul instructed the churches in Corinth and Galatia to do ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)). We are to give as a regular part of our corporate worship.

The second New Testament principle is to give in proportion to our income. Paul taught to give in keeping with how much we have prospered and according to our means or ability ([1 Corinthians 16:2](#); [2 Corinthians 8:2-3](#)).

Next, the New Testament teaches believers to give generously, and even at times sacrificially, but not to the point of personal deprivation ([Acts 20:35](#); [2 Corinthians 8:2-3](#), [8](#); [Romans 12:1](#); [Philippians 4:17-18](#)).

In the Old Testament, we are also introduced to the concept of "Storehouse" giving ([Malachi 3:10](#)). With storehouse giving, we are instructed to give where we worship. While this verse speaks on giving to the temple, we believe the key principle behind it is still relevant... that our primary giving would be to the church in which we belong.

Further, believers are instructed to give with a joyful heart, and not out of guilt or compulsion ([2 Corinthians 8:4](#); [9:7](#); [Philippians 4:16](#)).

These New Testament principles of giving are centered on one key factor: the believer's relationship with God. Deciding how much to give to the Lord ought to be a matter of prayer and obedience. As we seek to know God's heart through a consistent relationship with Him, we will discover the Lord's will concerning how much to give. It may be the conventional tithe (10%), or it may be some other amount.

As we recognize all that Jesus Christ has done for us, we will want to offer ourselves humbly and wholly to God as living sacrifices of worship to Him ([Romans 12:1-2](#)). Our giving will flow freely from hearts filled with gratitude and indebtedness, knowing that everything we have and everything we give already belongs to God. We own nothing. While the tithe may be an Old Testament concept, the New Testament requirement is radical and total obedience to the Lord, who guides every aspect of our lives, including our giving.

At New Hope, we will often use the phrase "**tithes & offerings**" in regard to giving. When we refer to the "tithe", we are not necessarily referring to the Old Testament obligation of giving 10% of your income, but are instead referring to that amount that you have set aside in your heart to joyfully & regularly give in proportion to your income. On special occasions, we will collect a

special offering, intended to be separate from or in addition to your normal giving. Examples of Special Offerings that we collect each year are the Lottie Moon Christmas offering (for foreign missions), the Annie Armstrong Offering (for North American missions), & The NW Impact offering (for missions in the Pacific Northwest).

Committing to the Mission of Jesus - Witnessing (becoming a fisher of men)

Statistics show that if a pastor visits a guest, _____% will return to church. If a layperson makes the visit, _____% will return to church.

What has Jesus commanded every Christian to be ([Acts 1:8](#))?

As a follower of Christ, you are brought into a story bigger than your life. The Bible tells the story of a broken world and its Creator's mission to redeem and restore it. In the New Testament, we see God becoming man and dying for our reconciliation.

(Review Three Circles and have everyone draw it out & explain it)

Read [2 Corinthians 5:14-21](#)

This passage details our new focus. [2 Corinthians 5:20](#) appoints us as the **ambassadors of Christ**. An ambassador is a person who is sent by their native country as its official representative to a foreign nation. They are identified by their nation of origin and their every action reflects on their homeland.

As ambassadors of Christ, we have a mission that requires our lives. God wants to tell His story through us. Just as the ambassador's actions reflect on his country, our actions reflect on Christ. Acting right, however, is not the ambassador's sole job. He must speak. While his actions affect how his words are received, He was sent to speak on behalf of his country. In the same way, God makes His appeal to our world through us.

As one who has been redeemed, you have a story to tell. As an ambassador of Christ, your job is to tell that story—through your actions and through your conversations.

A simple way for you to learn to tell your story is by writing it out in a short format. (You don't have to go into too many personal details if you are not comfortable).

1. **Before Jesus** --- What was life like before coming to faith? (when you were still in the "brokenness")
2. **Why Jesus** -- What made you consider following Jesus? How did you come to the realization that you needed something more? What "clicked"? What did Jesus do for you and how did that change everything?
3. **Since Jesus** -- How has this decision affected your life? Now that you "Know & Follow" Jesus, how have you been "Changed" by Him? In what ways, moving forward, is Jesus sending you back into the brokenness to help others.

Read [2 Corinthians 5:16](#)

Since we can no longer regard anyone from a worldly point of view, that means we are always on mission. Always.... **EVERY MEMBER IS A MISSIONARY**. This means there are people in your life waiting to hear more about Jesus.

Next Steps

As we come to the end of our Membership class, what are the appropriate NEXT Steps for you? If you are ready to **formally join New Hope Baptist Church** AND have completed ALL the class material, you simply need to come up during the invitation of one of the Worship Services and indicate your desire to join us.

If you have not yet been **baptized** (either by an SBC church or a church of “like faith and order”), you need to take that step of obedience in order to join. If you have additional questions about this, we encourage you to speak with the Pastor directly.

At New Hope, we require that in order to serve in a ministry position, that you are a member (or are at least known to the church) for a minimum of 6 months before serving. Are there certain areas of ministry that you feel gifted, equipped, and led to serve at New Hope? If so, where?