



# ***Surveying the Land:*** ***What's The Church & How Do I Become A*** ***Part Of It?***

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## ***Session Two*** ***Believing To Belong*** ***(How Do I Join A Church?)***

Joining a team is a two-way street. On the one hand, you join an organization to get something out of it. "Membership has its privileges", it's said. On the other hand, the group you join must get something out of you! It's assumed when you join a team that you'll be a team player and go along with a good deal of what the teams stands for. This is obviously true for the church as well. There are expectations and requirements that precede joining any team.

### **I. Jesus' Expectations and Requirements**

*What were some of Jesus' expectations of those who followed him?*

Matthew 10:32-33 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 10:37 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 9:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 9:62 \_\_\_\_\_

John 13:34 \_\_\_\_\_

John 14:15 \_\_\_\_\_

When you take everything that Jesus said, what he expected of those who followed him was basically:

Real **belief**  
&  
Real **fellowship**

And this is what is expected of those who become a member of the FBC family. To join the church, one must be a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Each member we receive should be able to give evidence of their faith and commitment through their:

**baptism** and their **testimony**.

## II. What Is A Real Christian?

There are lots of important questions that need to be asked in life. "Should I marry this person?" "Should I take this job?" "Which way to the restrooms?" But the most important question that can ever be asked is "What must I do to be saved?" Eternity rests on how we answer this question.



*Which things listed below **must be done** in order for a person to be saved? Check any which you believe are required.*

- Go to church
- Do good works
- Treat others with respect
- Do unto others as I would have them do unto me
- Read the Bible daily
- Talk about Jesus with others
- Love Pastor Bear's sermons
- Tithe
- Pray often
- Confess my sins often
- Fast monthly

**Oops!** This was sort of a trick question – sorry! The fact is – none of these are things **we must do** to be saved. The truth be known – **there is nothing we can do** to be saved. Not one good work or act of piety can secure our souls for heaven.



*“We...know that a man is not justified (i.e. saved) by observing the law (i.e. being good), but by faith in Jesus Christ...By observing the law no one will be justified.” (Galatians 2:15-16)*

### **Why not?**

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



### **So what?**



*“But your iniquities have **separated** you from your God; your sins have **hidden** his face from you.” (Isaiah 59:2)*

### **Why would this be so?**

*“Your eyes, God, are too **pure** to look on evil; you cannot tolerate **evil**.” (Habakkuk 1:13)*



### **All because of a little sin?**

*“The heart is **deceitful** above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)*

### **So no one is good enough to be saved on their own?**

*“There is **no one** who does good, not even one.” (Romans 3:12)*



### **Just how good would I have to be to get to heaven on my own?**

*“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is **guilty** of breaking all of it.” (James 2:10)*



### ***I guess I'm in trouble then!***

*"For the wages of sin is **death**." (Romans 6:23)*

### ***How can anyone be saved in that case?***

*"Christ came into the world to save sinners...(He) gave himself as a **ransom** for all men." (1 Timothy 1:15; 2:5-6)*



*"God made Him who had no **sin** to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

### ***So what must I do to be saved?***



*"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)*

*"To all who **received** him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." (John 1:12)*

### ***How do I "receive" Jesus? It's as easy as A,B,C (and D!)***

**Admit** your need for Christ – that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness, that you are broken and in need of wholeness, that you are lost and need to be found.

*"Apart from me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5)*

*"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17)*

**Believe** that Jesus died to pay the price for your sins, that he rose again, and is alive today to help you live a new life.

*"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)*

**Call** on Jesus through prayer to forgive you and save you. Give him your life. Accept his offer of forgiveness and salvation. Confess your longing that Jesus be the Savior and Lord (i.e. leader) of your life from here on out.

*"God, have mercy on me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13)*

*"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)*

**Determine** to become his disciple and follower.

*“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” (John 14:15)*

*“Faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26)*



*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21)*

Your new life in Christ can begin by saying a simple prayer of commitment like this:

*“Dear God, I know I have sinned in your sight. I have broken your laws and broken your heart by the way I have lived my life. I repent and turn from my sins. I believe Jesus died for my sins, rose from the grave, and is alive forever. I open the door of my heart and life, receiving Jesus Christ as my Savior. I want to follow him as the Lord and Leader of my life. Fill me Holy Spirit of God. Wash away my sins and make me new. Thank you for saving me. Amen.”*

### III. The Importance of Your Testimony

Once you become a believer, God asks you to share your story of how you came to believe in Jesus with others. We call this story your **testimony**. Jesus once healed a blind man, and the man went around telling others, *“One thing I do know. I was blind and now I see!”* (John 9:25). That was his testimony.

If you’re a Christian, you have a testimony to share, whether you realize it or not. The Bible even tells us that we need to be prepared to give our testimony when asked.



*“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15)*

Our story has great power because when we share it, God uses it to awaken faith in others. We are even told that sharing our story is one of the ways God uses to defeat evil.

*“They overcame [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony...” (Revelation 12:10)*



For these reasons, when a person joins FBC, we ask that they share a simple presentation of their testimony with our pastor and spiritual leaders.

***But I don't know what to say!*** Your testimony should have a "BC" section to it, and an "AD" section. In other words, describe a little bit about what your life was like "before Christ" (before you fell in love with Jesus), and describe something about what your life is like now that you're a Christian. What changes has Jesus made in your life? What benefits have you found in being his disciple? Why do you love him?

***How long does it need to be?*** We encourage you to write out your story. It doesn't need to be more than one page in length. (Look at Acts 22:3-21 and Acts 26:1-23 for two versions of Paul's testimony.) This translates into 2-5 minutes of sharing.

## IV. The Importance of Baptism



### 1. Why do Christians practice baptism?

#### a. Because of Jesus' example.

*"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John." (Matthew 3:13)*

#### b. Because of Jesus' command.

*"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them..." (Matthew 28:19)*

### 2. What does baptism signify?

#### a. One of a believer's earliest acts of obedience.

*"Those who accepted his message were baptized..." (Acts 2:41)*

*"At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized." (Acts 16:33)*

#### b. An identification with Christ's death and resurrection.

*"We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)*

#### c. A sign of cleansing.

*"Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." (Acts 22:16)*

#### d. A sign of the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

*"As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove." (Mark 1:10)*

*“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)*

**e. Initiation into the Church.**

*“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...” (1 Cor.12:13)*

**3. When should a person be baptized?**

**a. After repentance.**

*“Repent and be baptized...” (Acts 2:38)*

*“Confessing their sins, they were baptized by [John] in the Jordan River.” (Matthew 3:6)*

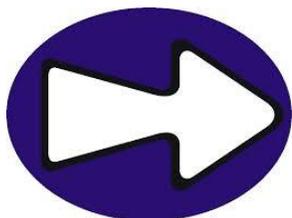
**b. After conversion.**

*“Go and make disciples...baptizing them...” (Matthew 28:19)*

*“But when they believed Philip as he preached the good new of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” (Acts 8:12)*

**c. After a profession of faith.**

*“The Lord opened [Lydia’s] heart to respond to Paul’s message...She and the members of her household were baptized.” (Acts 16:14-15)*



Because baptism follows repentance of sins and conversion to Christ, we call this **believer’s baptism**, in distinction from **infant baptism** practiced by other groups within Christianity. (Notice, we did not say **adult baptism**. We believe that repentance and faith are the sole criteria for being baptized.)

***Why do some groups practice infant baptism?***

In some instances, the Bible mentions that “entire households” were baptized and therefore, it is assumed that children were included. But primarily the reason has to do with the Jewish heritage of Christianity. In Judaism, every male was circumcised 8 days after his birth as a covenantal sign of being included in the community of faith. However, Christianity changed all this.

While in the Old Testament, one could be said to be “born a Jew”, in the New Testament it is clear that one cannot be “born a Christian”. We must be **born again** (John 3:3). And this requires a personal and informed decision of repentance and faith. Therefore, we affirm the practice of “believer’s baptism”.

In addition to believer's baptism, we affirm the practice of ***immersion*** as the biblical mode of baptism, as opposed to ***sprinkling*** or ***pouring***. Consider:

- *The word "baptism" comes from the Greek word "baptizo" which literally means to "immerse", "dip" or "submerge".*
- *The words "sprinkling" or "pouring" are never used in the New Testament for baptism.*
- *For the first 1,300 years of church history, immersion was the customary mode of baptizing.*

### ***Why does it matter?***

We want to be a church that is ***Christ-centered, Scriptural*** and modeled after the ***New Testament***. We want our worship to be as close as possible to the biblical pattern that is laid out for us. Our traditions must always be evaluated in the light of God's Word. Jesus warns us sternly not to allow our traditions to nullify the Word of God (see Matt. 15:6).

### ***What does this mean for me as I seek membership at FBC?***

Here at FBC, we recognize that other Christian traditions have differing baptistic practices and we would never suggest that these practices in any way exclude them from the Body of Christ. Baptism has been called a "means of grace", and as someone once said: "God's grace is always greater than our means."

One need not ever be "re-baptized" to become a member of FBC, provided that the initial baptism was a baptism "into Christ", accompanied by true repentance and faith. You along with the spiritual leadership of FBC must determine in good conscience if an earlier rite of baptism you underwent fulfilled biblical requirements (or was it more a *dedication*?)