



5:17 church baptism course¹

Session 1 - The Journey begins: Grace to you!

How did you become a Christian?

Read the following and summarise briefly in your own words:

- *Ephesians 2:8-10*

- *Titus 3:5*

The substance of the gospel: the person and work of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the gospel (the “good news”); it is his holy history, the news of who he is and what he has done for us. The gospel includes Jesus’ birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming return.

1. Jesus’ birth: *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins... the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" - which means, God with us. (Matt 1:21-23)*

2. Jesus’ perfect, sinless life: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15)*

3. Jesus’ death on the cross: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6)*

- a. Because Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, God no longer holds us responsible to pay for our sin. All of our sins are forgiven: past, present, and future. See Colossians 2:13-14
 - b. Not only are our sins forgiven, but we are also “justified”—that is, we are declared righteous by God.
- Righteousness is a legal term: it speaks of a “right standing” before God.
 - God considers the righteousness that Christ achieved as belonging to us.
 - This declaration is a once-for-all, permanent event in our lives that nothing can change.

¹ With appreciation for permission given, sessions 1-4 rely heavily upon Covenant Life Church’s *Starting Point* document.

“We never, therefore, move on from the cross of Christ—only into a more profound understanding of the cross.” —David Pryor

4. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead: *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins (1 Corinthians 15:17)*

5. Jesus’ ascension and return: *Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt 24:30-31)*

Note: The Christian is Christ’s man. Christ is Lord – He is not just Saviour, but Saviour and Lord.
Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Our response to all the above

A. Repentance: According to Acts 17:30, what is repentance and why should we do it?

B. Faith: According to Hebrews 11:1 and 11:6, what is faith and why should we do it?

We must act, but God gets the glory.

Recognizing God’s grace does not eliminate our responsibility to repent and believe. All people everywhere are commanded to do this (Acts 17:30). However, when we reflect back on our salvation and recognize that it was God’s prior actions that drew us to Himself, we are humbled and exult all the more over God’s amazing, undeserved, and glorious grace. We realize that, in the end, the difference between ourselves and someone who is unsaved is not our own superior goodness, intelligence, spiritual aptitude, or anything within ourselves at all. The only difference between us and them is the mercy and grace of God.

Session 2 - Continuing the Journey: Being holy!

As we noted last week, we embark upon the Christian journey when we respond to God's offer of salvation in Christ. No change could be more momentous—we are “born again” (John 3:3), we are “made alive” (Ephesians 2:5), we are transferred from the “domain of darkness” into “the kingdom of his beloved son” (Colossians 1:13), we are forgiven our sins (Ephesians 1:7), we are delivered from wrath (Romans 5:9), we are reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18)—as Jesus put it, we pass “from death to life” (John 5:24).

As dramatic as this change is, this is only the beginning. God's purposes for us don't end when we become Christians. Rather, conversion sets us on a glorious path in which God will continue to work out his gracious purposes in our lives. What are those purposes? How are they worked out? In this session, we will explore what God has for us as we “continue the journey” of the Christian life.

The Goal of Our Salvation: Holiness

Salvation is much more than simply deliverance from the penalty of sin. When God saves us, he makes us his own, and begins a renovation program: the process of making us more and more like our Lord Jesus—the process of making us holy (holy, saint, sanctified).

Read the following and summarise in your own words:

- *Romans 8:29*

- *1 Corinthians 10:31*

- *1 Thessalonians 4:7*

- *1 Peter 1:15-16*

The barrier to holiness: sin

Sin not only deserves God's punishment; it mars God's good creation and obscures the display of his glory. He therefore desires to eradicate sin and its corrupting effects from his creation. For the believer, salvation is the beginning of the process of removing sin and its effects from our lives.

- At regeneration, the power of sin is broken and we are made alive in Christ.
- In justification, the *penalty* of sin is removed as we are declared righteous in Christ.
- In sanctification, the *pollution* of sin is progressively removed as we are made holy in Christ.

People and holiness through time

- Able to sin – the choice was theirs (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6)

- Not able to not sin – the choice is not theirs (Jeremiah 17:9)
- Able to not sin – the choice is ours – (Galatians 5:1, 16)
- Not able to sin – no choice (Philippians 1:6, Revelation 21:3-4)

Weapons for the battle for our holiness

God has equipped us with numerous aids for our battle with sin, and we should seek to maximize the use and effectiveness of these aids.

- The Bible exposes and judges the motives, intents, and desires of the heart. It provides truth—God’s perspective on reality. *Read Hebrews 4:12*
- Prayer deepens our fellowship with God, and therefore brings a greater sensitivity to and conviction of sin. In prayer we can confess our sins cultivate a hatred for sin and a love for godliness, and receive strength for our battle with sin. *Read 1 John 1:9*
- The Holy Spirit dwells in us so that we can say “no” to the passions and desires of our sinful nature. God has made us new creatures in Christ, and he is actively at work to transform our hearts. *Read Galatians 5:16*
- Fellow Christians are a crucial part of this battle. We all battle sin and suffer from some degree of spiritual blindness due to the deceptive nature of sin. Therefore, each Christian should be committed to receiving help from others in this battle. This includes confessing our sin to each other and receiving observations from each other. *Read Hebrews 10:24*

Few endeavors could be more exciting than the glorious pursuit of becoming more like Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Far from making us self-centred or morbidly introspective, our pursuit of holiness intensifies our joy as we become more amazed at God’s forgiveness, more free from the sin in our lives, and more intimately acquainted with our God.

Ultimately, our holiness brings God glory as His character is increasingly displayed in our lives. Such mercy and grace provides powerful motivation to cooperate with God’s sanctifying work in our lives and so to “continue the journey” of the Christian life in the context of the local church.

Session 3 - Together on the journey: Relationships in the church

Although we enter into a relationship with God as individuals, we nevertheless enter into something greater than our own individuality: the church—the community of God’s people. We will find that, besides being woven into the very fabric of the Christian life, our relationships with other believers are a tremendous means of blessing, both for ourselves and others. God never meant for us to live the Christian life alone. Instead, he gives us the marvelous privilege of traveling on this journey together.

God’s Community through time

Read and summarise the following Bible verses:

Genesis 12:2-3.

Exodus 19:5-6

1 Peter 2:9-10

Revelation 7:9

Our lives are to give expression to the reality of our existence as the people of God. To deny this by pursuing individualism or independence is to isolate ourselves from the express purpose of God. The local church is God’s appointed context for this to take place. What does this mean practically?

Fellowship

The New Testament characterizes our relationships with each other by the word fellowship. The word often translated fellowship in the New Testament (*koinonia*—cf. Acts 2:42) is also rendered participation, partnership, and communion. The word expresses the idea of sharing something in common, or joining a mutual endeavour (often with sacrifice involved). Read and summarise the following:

1 Corinthians 1:9

1 John 1:3

The Bible is filled with things we are to do “to,” “with,” or “for one another.” Here is a sampling of how we are to position ourselves to experience true fellowship:

1. Worship God together (Ephesians 5:18-20).
2. Pray for one another (Ephesians 6:18).
3. Read the Bible together (1 Timothy 4:13)

4. Carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
5. Encourage one another (I Thessalonians 5:11).
6. Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16).
7. Correct one another (Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15).
8. Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

"Fellowship involves sharing what we have with others. One of the most valuable things we can share is ourselves: our time, our talents, and our energies in serving one another in the Body of Christ." —Jerry Bridges

Read and summarise: 1 Peter 4:10

Giving Expression to Servanthood at 5:17 Church

An important aspect of membership at 5:17 is finding a place to use one's gifts to glorify God and serve others. Involvement in service typically takes one of two forms:

- Spontaneous ministry opportunities: We all have numerous opportunities provided to us by God to serve Him and others. These spontaneous occasions encourage us in our dependence upon God and our cultivation of a servant's heart. It is essential that we respond to these unique opportunities as the Lord provides them.
- Structured ministries of the church: These include ongoing commitments made in various aspects of church life, such as Community Groups, music etc. These ministries provide concrete service opportunities and meet specific needs, as well as providing a source of relationship building and ongoing accountability.

"By his grace, together we are being changed into the image of Jesus Christ through progressive sanctification. Together we are experiencing mutual care, genuine fellowship, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We no longer just see—we observe. We no longer simply attend—we participate. We no longer selfishly consume— instead we are carrying out God's purpose for our lives as we contribute to the building of the local church." —C.J. Mahaney

Session 4: Reaching Others on the Journey: Mission – Witness and Works

Our relationship with God was never intended to be merely a private journey concerned only with one's personal beliefs. On the contrary, those who have been reconciled to God through the work of Christ by definition become "ambassadors for God" in sharing the gospel with others (2 Cor. 5: 18-20).

As we will see, each of us has the great privilege and responsibility of "reaching others on the journey" as we share the gospel with others, demonstrate the reality of the gospel in our lives, and participate in the mission of the local church.

Church with a Mission

We want to avoid the mistake of viewing church life as simply a routine to fulfill, or viewing ourselves as a static gathering of believers. From the very beginning, God's people had, at the core of their identity, an element of mission, and the goal of expansion.

A. The plan commenced: God's covenant with Abraham - *Genesis 22:17-18*

B. The plan continued: The Great Commission - *Matthew 28:18-20*:

C. The plan completed: The heavenly throning - *Revelation 7:9-10*

The subjects of evangelism: Every Christian!

The work of evangelism is essentially that of bearing witness—each of us is called to testify to what God has done for us through the gospel. Read and summarise the following:

Acts 1:8

1 Peter 3:15-16

The substance of evangelism: The Gospel

We aren't merely calling others to live a moral life, or asking them simply to "believe in God," or trying to convince them that Christians are "nice people." Read and summarise the following verses:

Romans 5:8

John 3:16

Acts 4:12

1 Corinthians 3:6-7

The method of our evangelism: Declaration and Demonstration

A. Declaration: Telling the good news - *Romans 10:14-15*

B. Demonstration: Living the good news - *Matthew 5:13-16*

In addition to proclaiming the gospel, Christians are to testify to the reality of the gospel by the way they live. This demonstration of the gospel takes place in countless, daily ways through the lives of individuals and families as they live their lives in our community.

True religion:

Read and summarise the following

Micah 6:8

James 1:27

The context of our witness and works

1. Personal. We encourage everyone at 5:17 to bear witness to Jesus Christ and share the gospel in the *network of relationships* He provides to each of us. These “fields of harvest” (see Matt. 9:38) include our family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, classmates—anyone whom God has sovereignly placed in your life.

2. Corporate. We believe that God has a plentiful harvest for us to reap in Brisbane. We therefore seek to reach those in the area in which God has placed us, and to provide contexts our members can utilize to reach out to those in their relational network.²

² Source: Covenant Life – Starting Point

Session 5: The Marks of the Journey - Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism

What is the meaning of baptism?

- *Baptism is a confession of faith in Christ* (Rom 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 8:37), associated with public acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord and Saviour (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 8:16).

- *It is an experience of communion (unity) with Christ* (Col 2:12). Baptism expresses our laying hold of Christ and the blessings of His salvation: where Jesus cleanses us from sin, renews us inside by cleansing us by the Holy Spirit, equips us for service, and brings us into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12; 1 Peter 3:21).

- *It is a symbol of a dedication of living for Christ* (Rom 6:4-22). Thus, careless living is seen as a denial of baptism.

- *It is a promise of consumption through Christ* (Rom 6:22). Like the Lord's Supper, baptism points us both back to the great gospel events of the past (Jesus' death and resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit), and forward to our share in the future promises of God, which have been guaranteed by our new unbreakable relationship with Jesus.

Baptism illustrates our new life as a Christian – it is the outward and visible expression of an inward and spiritual grace. The most important thing is not the going under water and coming up again, but the fact that God has poured His Holy Spirit into us and made us clean on the inside – no longer His enemies but now His friends!

Baptism doesn't make you a believer (Eph 2:8-9) – it shows that you already believe. Baptism doesn't 'save' you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it's the outward symbol of the inner commitment of Jesus' love for you and your love for Him.

In summary, baptism is a new identity marker as being God's child and a member of God's people.

Why should I be baptised?

1. Because Christ commands it as the initial step of obedience in your new life of discipleship to Christ (Matt 28:19-20). It demonstrates that you really are a believer (Acts 18:8; 1 John 2:3).
2. Because there is the blessing of God's favour that comes with all obedience, as well as the joy that comes through public profession of one's faith, and the reassurance of having a clear physical picture of dying and rising with Christ and of washing away sins. The Lord gave us baptism to strengthen and encourage our faith.

Who should be baptised?

1. Every person who believes that Jesus is both their Lord and Saviour. It is for all people who make a sincere profession of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12 and 13).
2. By baptising children prematurely, we risk a profession of faith that was made simply to please believing parents or to be accepted into a Christian sub-culture.

When should I be baptised?

1. As soon as you have believed (Acts 2:41; Acts 8:35-38)

2. There is no reason to delay. As soon as you have decided to receive Christ into your life, you can and should be baptised. If you wait until you are 'perfect', you'll never feel 'good enough'!

The Lord's Supper

What is the Lord's Supper?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

1. It is a simple act (verse 23)
2. It is a reminder (verse 24)
3. It is a symbol (verse 25)
4. It is a statement of faith (verse 26)

Who should take the Lord's Supper?

Only those who are already believers (Mark 14:22-26; 1 Cor 11:29)

How do I prepare myself for the Lord's Supper?

Read 1 Cor 11:27-28

1. By self-examination (1 Cor 11:27)
2. Confessing my sins (1 John 1:9)
3. By recommitment (Rom 12:1)
4. By restoring relationships (Matt 5:23-24)

What happens during the baptism service?

1. At the beginning of the service, the Pastor/Elder will briefly explain the meaning of baptism.
2. This is then followed by you sharing a brief (approx. three minute) testimony of how you became a Christian and why you want to be baptised as a believer.
3. Then you will wait at the edge of the pool for your turn to be baptised (Please bring a change of clothes, a towel and a plastic bag for your wet clothes).
4. You will then enter the water where the Pastor/Elder will ask you the following questions:
 - “Do you believe Jesus Christ is exactly who He claimed to be.”
 - “Have you renounced your old way of life, repented of your sins, asked God to forgive you sins, to cleanse you and make you a new creation.”
 - “Do you confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, King, Ruler of your life.”
 - “With a good conscience, do you pledge you life to Jesus Christ.”
5. Once you have answered in the affirmative, the Pastor/Elder will say “upon your profession of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
6. Then the Pastor/Elder will briefly lower you under the water and then raise you up out of the water
7. Then you can leave the pool, dry off, and watch the others.

Later you will be given a certificate of your baptism. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.