



Learning more about the Gospel, Baptism, and Church Membership

I. The Gospel

1. God

- He is the creator of all (*Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20*).
- He has absolute authority over everything (*Psalm 24:1; 103:19*).
- He is perfectly holy, without any sin (*Isaiah 6:3; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5*).
- He will judge all men (*Psalm 9:7-8; Romans 2:15-16; 14:10-12*).
- He requires perfect obedience to His law (*James 2:10; Matthew 5:48*).

2. Man

- We have all broken God's law and not given Him the proper worship, obedience, and love (*Romans 3:10, 23*).
- We all deserve God's righteous judgment (*Psalm 5:4*).
- We cannot fix the situation by our deeds (*Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5*).

3. Christ

- He demonstrated God's love for the world (*John 3:16; 1 Tim 2:4*).
- He is fully God (*John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 2:9*).
- He came to seek and to save that which was lost (*Luke 19:10*).
- By his perfect life and his death on the cross, he satisfied God's justice and took the place of sinners (*2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18*).
- He was raised from the dead in victory (*1 Corinthians 15:3-6*).

4. Response

- Jesus calls you to turn away from sin (repent) and follow him (*Isaiah 55:7; Luke 9:23; Acts 17:30*).
- Ask God for forgiveness and believe that Jesus died to pay for it (*John 3:16-17, 36*).
- Believe that Jesus rose from the dead and surrender your life to him (*Romans 10:9*).

II. Baptism

The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message describes baptism as:

...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. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism is connected to faith, repentance, and confession of sin

- Confessing your sins means acknowledging, not just that you do bad things, but that you are a sinner before God, unable to do anything to save yourself.
- Repentance means turning away from sin. It is a change of mind that results in a change of life. *See Luke 3:8-14; Acts 2:36-41.*
- John the Baptist refused to baptize religious leaders because there was no evidence that they were truly repentant. *See Matthew 3:7-8.*
- Since the Bible connects baptism with faith in those who have heard and understood the gospel, our church does not baptize babies. *See Acts 2:37-40; 8:12-13; 34-38; 16:14-15; 29-34; 18:8; 19:4-5.*

2. Baptism in water is a sign of baptism by the Spirit

- John the Baptist proclaimed that his water baptism pointed to One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. *See Mark 1:8; John 1:33.*
- Baptism is a physical picture of the spiritual baptism of every believer. Everyone who repents of sin and believes in Jesus Christ receives the Holy Spirit at that moment. *See Acts 2:38; 10:47; 1 Corinthians 12:13.*
- The Old Testament uses water language (pouring) to speak of the Holy Spirit and the New Covenant (*e.g. Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-29; Zechariah 12:10*).

3. Baptism is by immersion

- The Greek word for “baptize” means to immerse or dip.
- The biblical descriptions of baptism describe people going into and coming up out of a large body of water. *See Matthew 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39*
- Immersion is the best match for the symbolism of baptism:
 - Buried and raised with Jesus (*See Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12*)
 - Clothed with Jesus (*See Galatians 3:26-27*)
 - Washed from our sins (*See Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11*)

4. Baptism marks the initiation of a believer into the Christian community

- Baptizing believers was Jesus' command to the church, and it was the pattern of the early church. *See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-47.*
- In the New Testament, baptism is how someone is "added to the church." It is a sign of fellowship and unity with the visible body of Christ. *See 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 4:4-6.*
- Since baptism marks the initiation of a believer into the Christian community, here at FBBC it is a requirement for membership.

5. Baptism is not necessary for salvation

- Though it is a crucial step of obedience, the Bible teaches that salvation is by faith alone. All acts of obedience to Christ are the fruit of salvation, not the root. *See Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 3:21*
- Paul's ministry was centered on preaching the gospel, not baptizing. *See Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:17.*
- The early church clearly stated that salvation was based on faith (not by any external acts of obedience) and defended itself from legalistic attacks. *See Acts 15:6-11; Galatians 1:6-9; 2:15-16.*

III. Church Membership

Being a member of a church means that you have made a personal commitment to a local church that connects and identifies you as part of that church.

1. Limits and Separation

- The New Testament is very clear that the church is to have boundaries. There is to be a clear distinction between those that are *in* the church and those who are not. *See 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.*
- Acts refers to Christians joining the church, gathering together, and being "added" or "numbered." This tells us that the church was an identifiable group. *See Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4, 32; 5:13-14; 6:7; 9:26; 11:21, 24; 15:30; 16:5.*
- Unbelievers are referred to as "outsiders." *See 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; 1 Timothy 3:7.*
- The practice of removing someone from the church assumes that there exists a formal, visible connection to the group. *See Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14.*

2. Language and Symbols.

- God has given us very vivid metaphors for the church which imply a strong, visible connection to one another.
- The church is a bride. This points to a formal covenantal relationship. *See 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23, 30-32; Revelation 19:7-8.*

- The church is a body. This points to a connection to one another. *See Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-31; Ephesians 2:16, 21-22; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16, 25; Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15*
- The church is a building. Unless stones or bricks are attached, they are not a building. *See 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5.*
- The church is branches. We are all connected to Christ who is the vine. *See John 15:1-8.*
- The church is a family, and God is our Father. Again, this implies a formal connection. *See John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26; 4:5-6; 6:10; Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15; 1 Peter 4:17; 1 John 3:1.*
- The church is a flock. This points to a group that has been numbered and is cared for. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd. *See Matthew 26:31; Luke 12:32; John 10:1-30; 1 Peter 5:2-3.*
- The pictures we get for the church remind us that in order to have a whole, the parts must be connected.

3. Love and Service

- We have many instructions in the Bible for the way Christians are supposed to treat one another. What is especially important to keep in mind is that these were not simply generic commands. They mainly had to do with how Christians treated others in their local church.
- The commands to service and love assume a commitment and a connection between a group of people.
- Here are some of the “one anothers” (negative and positive).

• Don't steal	• Don't lie	• Don't complain
• Don't challenge	• Don't judge	• Don't be a stumbling block
• Don't boast	• Don't envy	• Don't bite and devour
• Love	• Accept/Greet	• Be at peace with
• Serve	• Encourage	• Be humble toward
• Admonish	• Be kind to	• Bear the burdens of
• Forgive	• Confess sins to	• Seek the good of
• Pray for	• Comfort	• Seek counsel from
- Being a member of a church means you have a church family where you can be obedient to these commands. You have a specific, identifiable group that you are connected to.
- The full expression of loving one another is loving the other members of your church. Those are the people we are especially called to love.
- Being committed to others in the church also helps us grow in sanctification. The community helps mold us into Christ's image.
- If someone leaves a church at the first sign of relational problems, they stop the process God uses to expose sin and work on the heart.
- Being a member also means you have a place to develop and use your gifts for the benefit of others.

4. Leadership and Submission

- The Bible has very clear responsibilities for the leaders and members of a local church. These responsibilities only make sense if there is a formal association or an official list of members.
- Shepherds can only watch over a flock if they know who is part of it. The flock the elders watch over is not the entire city. It is the members of our church. *Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:1-4.*
- The leaders of the church will give an account to God for the souls of its members. *See Hebrews 13:17.*
- The assistance given to widows was only for widows in the church. *See Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:9.*
- There is evidence that when a Christian moved to a new location, the church sent a letter to the new group making sure the person was recognized, welcomed, and connected. *See Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1; 2 Corinthians 3:1-2; Colossians 4:10.*
- The Bible commands members to submit to, obey, honor, esteem, and call on their elders for help. These commands imply the leaders are accessible, but also that you know who they are and can see into their lives. If you are not committed or joined to a church, you have no leaders to submit to. *See 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:7, 17; James 5:14-15; 1 Peter 5:5.*
- The relationship between leaders and members of a church implies a formal connection. This is what church membership accomplishes.

IV. Important Information

1. 2000 Baptist Faith and Message
2. FBBC Bylaws
3. Membership Covenant

V. The Baptism/Membership Process

1. Fill out Information Packet (5 pages) and submit to office. Page 5 asks you to initial saying you've looked over the documents and agree to abide by them.
2. The office will process the form and contact you to schedule an interview with one or more elders. The interview with an elder is a way for us to get to know each other better. If time does not permit, there may be more than one interview.
3. After the interview, your name will be submitted for membership to the elders.
4. After the elders are prepared to proceed with your application, you will be asked to write out a personal testimony to share with the congregation. Another member will be assigned to work with you on finalizing the testimony.
5. Once your testimony is complete, the church office will contact you to schedule a time for baptism/membership presentation.
6. A person is not officially considered a member of FBBC until he/she is presented before the congregation.