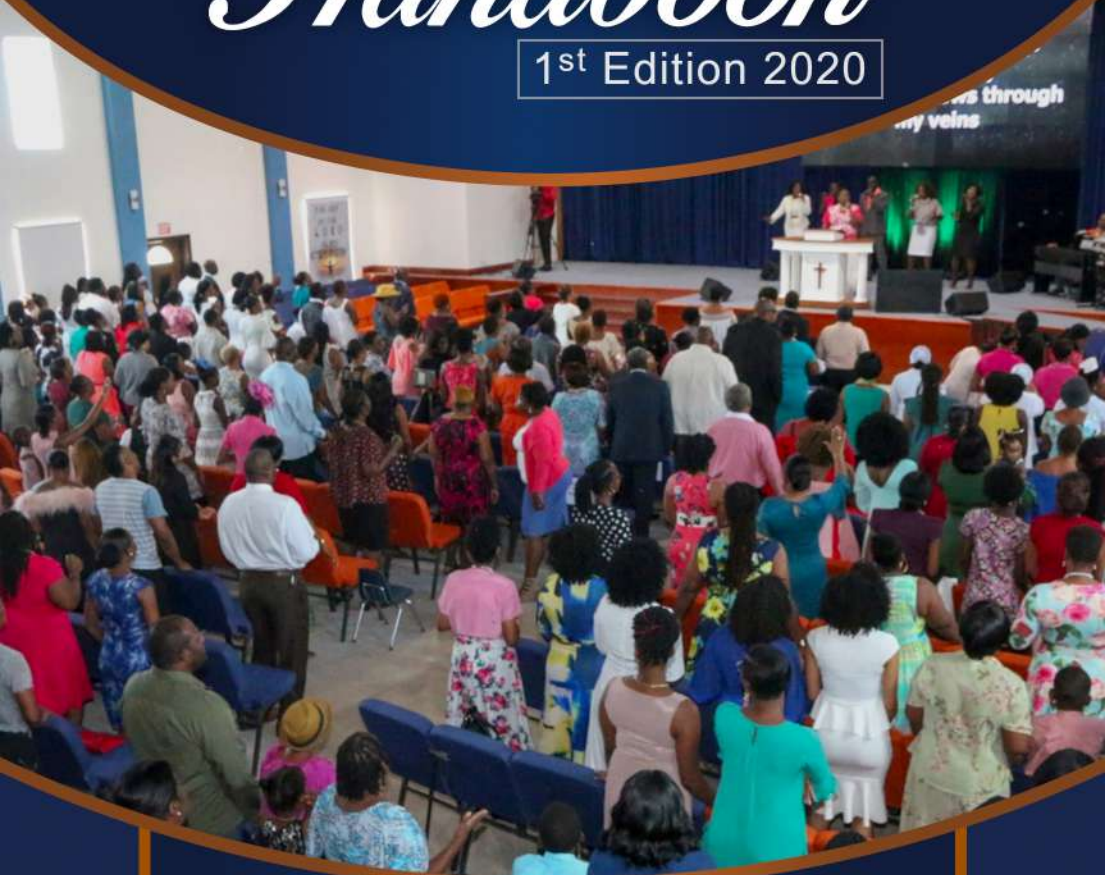


MEMBERS

Handbook

1st Edition 2020



"Solid Foundation Certain Growth"

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Pastor's MESSAGE

From My Heart To Yours

As lead pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church I welcome you to the membership class. I encourage you to prayerfully study the teachings of the church and enjoy the sessions. Each lesson describes what the church believes and how we try to live out these convictions.

As you learn more about the church's beliefs and practices, please be praying about how you can become more connected here. In the New Testament,

to be a Christian is to belong to the people of God and to be connected in fellowship with God and each other.

Based upon the description of the early church in Acts 2:42–47, we see three distinctives which have become our core values:

- Gospel Proclamation
- Gospel Transformation
- Gospel in Community

Expressed differently, we emphasize Worship, Witness and Works! We are a gospel centered church with shared values and resources; but the church is more than this—the church is the living, breathing body of Christ, and you are part of this church, God's church.

I welcome you to this dynamic relationship where together we commit to live out our faith aided by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Pastor Lincoln Connor



Qualifications **FOR MEMBERSHIP**

At Antioch Baptist Church, the primary qualification for membership is a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. While none of us can fully examine another to know the deepest thoughts of the mind and soul, still there is evidence in word and deed to the necessary faith. To that end, the Ministerial Staff members who are leading the Membership Classes will hear from each candidate for membership a statement of his or her faith in Jesus Christ.

Each candidate for membership should prepare to present a short (3–4 minutes) statement regarding his or her relationship with Jesus Christ. The bylaws also require that members be baptized. Even after baptism, you will not be accepted into the membership until you have completed ALL the membership classes. If you have been previously baptized, and were a member of another church, you will need to speak with the lead pastor about membership.

You will also be asked to sign the confession of faith adopted by this church. In addition to subscribing to the personal confession of faith, members must also commit to the Church's Covenant. This statement is distinct from the personal confession of faith and has to do with your pledge to uphold the beliefs and organization of this church while you are among us.

Church COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world. to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all backbiting and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness, sexual immorality and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

Church COVENANT

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do His will; working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Signed:

Date:

Class One

THE BIBLE

We believe the scriptures teach that there is one, and only one, living and true God; an infinite, intelligent spirit, whose name is Jehovah, the maker and supreme ruler of heaven and earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct, but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:21-22; John 17:3).

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE BIBLE AT ANTIOCH

Antioch Baptist Church, since its founding in 1963, has held to a "high view" of Scripture. That is, we hold it to be God's inspired, inerrant word that is sufficient for all matters of faith and Christian living. A person who takes his or her Christian faith seriously will want to give serious attention to the Bible in its entirety. It becomes a matter of life commitment to understand properly what God has said to us as a church and to us as individuals.

In addition to hearing the Bible preached weekly, we must spend time daily feasting upon the Word of God. Our high view of Scripture must translate into a deep dedication to know God's Word and to live it out.

The Bible is inspired by God. We believe the Bible is inspired by God. We know that the Bible is the Word of God from the testimony of Scripture itself. Jesus considered the Old Testament, his Bible, to be God's Word (Matthew 4:4; Matthew 22:41-44). If we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, then we must believe his witness concerning Scripture. The writers of the New Testament also considered the Old Testament and their own writings to be authoritative (1 Corinthians 2:12-13; Romans 3:1-2; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Considering the testimony of Scripture to support that the Bible is the Word of God may seem circular.

Class One

THE BIBLE

We must also have the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to know that the Bible is God's Word (John 16:12–15; Ephesians 6:17 with Hebrews 4:12). The inward witness of the Holy Spirit is just as necessary to recognize the Bible as the Word of God, as it is to recognize that Jesus is the Son of God. This is not a matter of imparting new information, but of enlightening darkened minds.

The Bible is Inerrant

We believe that the Bible is without error (inerrant). The very words of the original texts of the 66 books of the Bible are free from error, not just in matters of faith and practice, but also in all aspects (Galatians 3:16, Matthew 22:32). The character of God informs the way we approach his Word: it is the product of an all-powerful, all-knowing God who is free from error (Psalm 12:6; 18:30; 19:7; Proverbs 30:5–6; John 17:17).

The Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice. We believe that the Bible is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice, or Christian living (2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:3). Experience is severely limited as a basis for determining truth because it is changeable, ambiguous (it does not interpret itself), and is subject to self-deception. Thus, we should seek to interpret our experience in the light of God's Word, rather than interpreting God's Word in light of our experience.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. What would be the implication for Christianity and for your own life if the Bible were simply an ordinary book and not inspired by God?
2. If someone were to say to you that the Bible can't be trusted, because it is full of errors and outdated information, how would you respond?
3. What opportunities do you have to hear the Word of God? What can you do to be more intentional about applying the Bible to your life after you hear it preached or taught? Are you currently involved in a small group? Why or why not?
4. Do you have a personal "reading plan" for the Bible? If so, what is it? If not, what can you do to implement one?

Class Two

THE TRIUNE GOD

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “TRINITY”?

God as “three Persons in One” expresses the distinctive Christian understanding of God, and reflects our view at Antioch Baptist Church. The Bible speaks of one God but attributes the characteristics of God to three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father created all things and planned the redemption of his people from all eternity (Genesis 3:14–15; Ephesians 1:3–12); God the Son accomplished that redemption on the cross (Romans 3:21–24; Galatians 3:13–14); and God the Spirit applies the benefits of that eternal redemption to all believers (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:4–7).

The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of describing this biblical revelation of the nature of God. It states that God is one in essence, but that he exists in three Persons who are equal, eternal, inseparable and interdependent. We must note that our English word, “Persons,” falls short as a way to describe God because it can give the impression of three separate individuals; rather, a more accurate view is that God is one being with three personal self-distinctions.

WHY SHOULD WE USE THE WORD “TRINITY”?

We might wonder why we should accept the word “Trinity” as a way to describe God when it isn’t in the Bible. Heretical groups came on the early Church scene and denied either the deity of Christ or that of the Holy Spirit. This drove Christians to search the Scriptures to come up with a formal way to describe the Bible’s teaching on the nature of God, and the doctrine of the “Tri-unity” was the result. Tertullian, an early Church father, was the first to use the term “Trinity” in 215 AD. Like the word “Trinity,” there are many words such as “omniscient,” “ineffable,” “omnipresent,” “self-existent” and “uncreated,” none of which is found in the Bible, but nevertheless, each of which can be extremely helpful for us in summarizing what the Bible clearly teaches about the character of our amazing God.

Class Two

THE TRIUNE GOD

We often act as if the concept of the Trinity is something negative since it is difficult for us to grasp; rather, we should view it as something wonderful because it means not only that we have a God who is greater and more mysterious than our imaginings, but also that we have a God who seeks a personal relationship with us through the redemption of the Son and the presence of the Spirit. If God were not a Trinity, he would be the God of Deism or Islam, both impersonal and unknowable.

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; and in the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the beginning "was with God," and "was God," and who "himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness."

Because he is a trinity, God himself exists in community: three persons of one essence, who love each other with a perfect love and whose love overflowed in the creation and redemption of humanity. When God created humanity in his image, he created us as relational beings, created to love each other and our Creator.

HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS GOD IN PRAYER?

Since God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are "Persons," we should speak of them as such (e.g., the Holy Spirit is "He" and not "It"). Though we may certainly address any member of the Trinity in prayer, it may be helpful to follow the guidance of Scripture. Jesus addressed God as "Father" in his model prayer for his disciples (Matthew 6:9–13), and he told them to pray to the Father in his name once he was no longer on this earth (John 16:22–24). Since we have God's Spirit dwelling in us, it is by his power that we cry out to God in prayer and seek his will (Romans 8:15–16; 26–27). Thus, in addressing God in prayer it can be helpful to think of praying to God the Father in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Class Two

THE TRIUNE GOD

JESUS: FULLY GOD AND FULLY MAN

Crucial to our understanding of the Trinity is the Bible's presentation of Jesus Christ as fully man (Matthew 8:23–24; 21:18; John 11:32–36) and fully God (John 1:1–3; John 10:30; 17:4–5; Titus 2:13), in possession of both divine and human natures, unified in one person. The two natures coexisted in union without confusion or change, separation or division. Jesus Christ had to possess both natures in order to be our Lord and Savior. Because he was fully divine, Jesus is able to be the perfect and eternal sacrifice for the complete atonement of our sins, as well as our permanent high priest, allowing us to be eternally reconciled to God (Hebrews 7:23–28). Because he was fully human, Jesus was able to be our proper substitute on the cross to experience the wrath of God, and he is able to be a comfort and example for our daily living (Hebrews 2:14–18).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is the concept of God as Trinity so important to our faith? What would we lose if we deny that God is both one and three? Compare our Trinitarian faith with other religions or systems of beliefs with which you are familiar.

Class Three

SALVATION

WHAT IS “SALVATION”?

Salvation is a broad term that expresses God’s provision for the predicament of his people. In the Old Testament this word is used to describe God’s deliverance of his people from their enemies so that they might experience his blessings. This temporal salvation proves to be a visual aid for the spiritual and eternal salvation God’s people are truly in need of. Our biggest need is to be reconciled to God because our sin makes us worthy only to receive his wrath (Romans 6:23).

God’s deliverance of Israel out of slavery at the Exodus foreshadows the Second Exodus by which Jesus would defeat the Enemy of our souls and lead his people out of slavery to sin and death and into the inheritance of eternal life with God. The gospel, or “good news,” is that God has finally accomplished salvation for his people through the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

JESUS IS THE FOCAL POINT OF SALVATION HISTORY

The truth of salvation is revealed progressively throughout the Bible. God created us to be in relationship with him, but from very early on that relationship was broken by sin. God punished Adam and Eve for their sin by sending them out of the Garden of Eden to toil in labor, but he did not punish them eternally as they deserved. Rather, he promised that a seed of the woman would render a deathblow to Satan and therefore to sin and death, though not before receiving mortal wounds (Genesis 3:15).

Class Three

SALVATION

Furthermore, God clothed them with the skin of a slain animal, which foreshadowed the sacrifice for sin that would be made on their account. The seed of the woman is, of course, Jesus Christ. God's forgiveness of Adam and Eve, and of every Old Testament believer after that, signed the death warrant of Christ. The only way God could forgive sin yet remain true to his holy character was to send Jesus to pay the punishment that all his people from the beginning to the end of time deserve for their sin (Romans 3:25-26). The redemptive work of Christ, then, is the center of history.

God's people of all time (both OT and NT) have their salvation secured in the same way, by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Old Testament believers looked ahead through shadows to that sacrifice while we look back on it with clarity.

We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and in the final judgment of all people. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

HOW IS SALVATION APPLIED TO THE BELIEVER?

The Bible speaks of our salvation as something that is past, present and future: we have been saved (Romans 8:24; Ephesians 2:5, 8); we are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Philippians 2:12-13); we will be saved (Romans 5:10; 13:11; 1 Peter 1:13; Hebrews 1:14). It is helpful to think of salvation as encompassing regeneration and justification (past and present), sanctification (present) and glorification (future). The salvation of our souls includes each of these works of God and more. We must not think of "salvation" simply as the moment that we profess faith in Christ.

Class Three

SALVATION

Regeneration

Salvation is dependent upon the work of God who must give us new life before we can repent from our sin and exercise faith in Christ. Jesus told Nicodemus, “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit” (John 3:5–6). Jesus describes the kind of change that must happen to a person in order for him or her to enter the kingdom of God, a change that is effected by the Holy Spirit. Because we are in bondage to sin and Satan, we can no more to be saved than a dead person can will to rise to life or a blind person can will to see (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:5–6; 6:44; Romans 3:10–12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–3).

We need the work of the Spirit to restore our hearts from the pollution of sin and to give us new inclinations towards God. We then respond to the Spirit’s working in our hearts by exercising faith in Christ. In this way, we receive salvation by God’s grace through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6–14; Ephesians 2:4–10).

Justification

When we are given new hearts and freely respond to the truth of the gospel in faith, God justifies us. Justification is a judicial act by which God pronounces the sinner righteous, putting him or her in a permanently right relationship with himself (Romans 3:23–24). God declares us “not guilty” by crediting the perfect obedience of Christ to our account (Romans 4:5), so that when we identify with Christ the law is fulfilled perfectly in us (Romans 8:3–4). With justification an exchange takes place: whereas Jesus took our sin and its punishment upon himself at the cross, we are clothed with his righteousness. We believe that Jesus will return one day to bring final judgment and that God will judge those who have believed in him on the merits of Christ rather than on their own merits. Those who are judged on the merits of Christ will enter into everlasting life, while those who are judged on their own merits will enter into everlasting hell.

Class Three

SALVATION

Sanctification

Although we have been saved (justification) and already experience many of God's blessings, we still struggle with sin and live in a world where Satan rules. In a sense, we have one foot in heaven and one on earth. Sanctification is the process by which we are being saved as the Holy Spirit works in us to progressively free us from sin and make us more like Christ. Thus, we believe that we are saved "by grace through faith" in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that good works are the certain fruit of such faith. We therefore offer ourselves for Christian service as a means of expressing our gratitude to Him, and to extend His cause. Our salvation not only includes Christ dying for us, but also Christ living in us. Christ lives in us through his Holy Spirit whom he sends to indwell every Christian (Romans 8:3–14).

While obedience merits nothing towards our salvation, it is the necessary result of the Spirit's presence in the lives of believers (Romans 6:1–7; James 2:24–26). The miracle of the New Covenant promised by the OT prophets is not that God would one day lower his holy standards for our lives, but that at last his Spirit would write his law upon our hearts, rather than upon tablets of stone, so that we would love and obey him (Jeremiah 31:33; cf. Deuteronomy 30:6–8; Ezekiel 36:26f.). As we examine our lives to see the fruit of obedience (Philippians 2:12–13; 1 Peter 1:2–11) we must keep in mind two things. First, obedience is not something we muster up, but something the Spirit produces in us; second, the Christian is not someone who is better than everyone else, but someone who is better than he or she once was.

Class Three

SALVATION

Glorification

We look forward to the time we will be saved. When Christ comes again our salvation will reach its culmination and we will be glorified with him. This hope is founded on the resurrection of Christ and the fact that the same Spirit who raised him from the dead now dwells in us. The presence of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will follow Jesus, the first-born from the dead, in the resurrection of our own bodies to glory and immortality (Romans 8:11–25; 1 Corinthians 15:40–44; 51–57). In Romans 8:28-30, Paul describes the progressive parts of our salvation, ending by saying, “those whom he justified he also glorified” (v. 30). Glorification for those in Paul’s day and for us is a future event, yet Paul uses the past tense. He does so to stress the surety of our hope, speaking as if it has already happened because it is guaranteed to come about according to God’s sovereign plan and work in our lives. As Paul says elsewhere, “I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Define “Salvation” in your own words. Why do we hold to the exclusivity of Christ (i.e., that Jesus is the only way of salvation)?
2. If someone were to ask you to explain the gospel, what would you say?
3. What evidence of the Holy Spirit’s work can you see in your life since you became a Christian?
4. In what ways can the past, present and future aspects of your salvation encourage you in your daily living?
5. For whose salvation are you currently praying?
In what ways are you enabling others to hear about God’s salvation?

Class Four

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

As we saw with the Trinity, God reveals the person of the Holy Spirit progressively throughout Scripture. Wherever he appears, the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God. The temple is the place where God dwells and shows forth his glory.

The very first “temple” created was the universe, and so the Holy Spirit first appeared at Creation. When the Spirit hovered over the waters (Genesis 1:2), he was creating a natural revelation of the supernatural glory of heaven. Heaven and earth were established as a holy palace, or a macrocosmic royal residence, of the Creator King. This is why the Psalmist tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19), and God says, “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool” (Isaiah 66:1). After creating the universe as his macrocosmic “temple,” God created the Garden of Eden as a microcosmic “temple,” and it was the focal point of God’s presence among people until the Fall.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

During the ministry of Moses the people of God built the tabernacle and the Holy Spirit came and filled this temple of God (Exodus 40:34–35), showing that this was the place where God dwelled and showed forth his glory. During the reign of Solomon, a stationary temple was built, and the Spirit of God came and filled the temple in the same way (2 Chronicles 5:11–6:2; 7:1–3). When Israel was exiled for continually breaking God’s law, Solomon’s temple was destroyed. The prophets looked forward to the restoration of God’s people along with a promise of a magnificent temple where the Spirit would come to dwell in an unprecedented way (Ezekiel 39:27–29; 43:1–9), and would be poured into the hearts of all God’s people (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Joel 2:28–29). But when some exiles finally returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, the Spirit did not inhabit it as before.

Class Four

THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The incarnation brought the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophetic hope. At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended to earth for the first time since before the exile, because Jesus was the temple of God par excellence (Mark 1:9–11). The gospel of John tells us that Jesus dwelled, or literally “tabernacled” among us and embodied the glory of God (John 1:14; see also 2:19). Jesus was the “place” where God dwelled and showed forth his glory; the One in whom God dwelled among his people in a new way. After his death, resurrection and ascension, Jesus poured out the Spirit upon his followers, fulfilling the promise of the prophets that God We believe the Holy Spirit has led us to repent of all our sins, and to turn from them, and to obey Christ where He says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” 18 21 would pour out his Spirit in an unprecedented way upon his people (Acts 2:1–21). Just as the Holy Spirit inhabited the temple of God in the Old Testament, he now inhabits the people of God to show that this is the place he dwells and shows forth his glory. This is the creation of the Church: we, both individually and corporately, are the temple of God and the dwelling place of his Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY

Since the Holy Spirit creates and inhabits the temple of God, and since we are that temple, the Spirit is the primary mover throughout the process of our salvation. The Holy Spirit regenerates believers so that we may turn from our sin, exercise faith in Christ and receive the gift of salvation (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5–7). Because the temple of God is a holy place, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us throughout our lives, making us holy (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:13). In order to do this, he leads us into truth, illuminating our minds and hearts to understand God’s Word (John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27; Ephesians 1:17–18); and he produces obedience in us (1 Peter 1:1–2).

Class Four

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is also the primary mover in creating, inhabiting and building up the corporate temple of God, the Church (Ephesians 2:21–22).

He works to bring about unity in the Church among the individual “pillars” of the “temple” through the manifestation of fruit and gifts. The fruit of the Spirit Since all Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them (Romans 8:9–10), all Christians will inevitably bear his fruit. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in the context of the freedom we have in Christ, freedom that is meant for serving one another in love rather than indulging in sin (Galatians 5:13–18).

The acts of the sinful nature have to do with broken relationships and disunity in the body of Christ (vv. 19–22), and these acts are the opposite of the fruit of the Spirit. This means that the fruit of the Spirit does not refer to subjective characteristics (like “inner peace”), but to attitudes and actions that build relationships and unity in the Church (like “peace with my neighbor”), vv. 23–26. The extent of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will be most evident in the way we treat our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

All Christians will also manifest the gifts of the Spirit, though in varying ways. The Greek word *charisma*, “gift,” is related to the word *charis*, grace. The gifts of the Spirit are concrete expressions of the grace of God to the Church. Paul speaks of the “gifts” synonymously with “service/ministries” and “effects/working” (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). Thus, it seems that a “gift” of the Spirit does not have to do as much with a personal ability, as with the outworking of a ministry, or an expression of grace. In other words, the gifts of the Spirit are something we manifest, not something we possess. We manifest the gifts of the Spirit as we carry out ministry and service within the body of Christ. For instance, a person practices the gift of hospitality whenever he welcomes someone into his home, whether he has a natural ability or inclination to be a host.

Class Four

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Our position at Antioch Baptist Church is that any debate about charismatic gifts is not an issue to divide over, and so diverse views are represented in our congregation. However, the teaching staff disagrees somewhat with the Charismatic understanding of certain gifts (particularly tongues and prophecy), and rejects the frequent implication that tongues are a necessary or expected initial evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." It is easy to feel in a large church that your presence and participation are irrelevant, but Scripture teaches that each believer has been given a spiritual gift to be used for the common good. Your presence and ministry in and through the church is therefore vital to our ability to be the living temple of God.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. How is your understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit enhanced as you consider the progressive revelation of him through the Old and New Testaments?
2. How does the Holy Spirit's work to convict us of sin and draw us to Christ relate to his primary work of creating and inhabiting God's temple?
3. As you consider your relationships with others in the body of Christ, where do you see the most room for growth in your bearing the fruit of the Spirit?
4. How have you seen the Holy Spirit manifested in your life?

Class Five

THE CHURCH

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

As we observed in our study of the Holy Spirit, God creates his Church by pouring out his Spirit to inhabit his people, both individually and corporately (Acts 2). By the working of the Spirit, the Church is the body of Christ, made up of individuals who serve one another through diverse gifts and ministries with a view to being built up in unity & love (1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 4:11–16). Therefore, to be a Christian is to be in an interdependent relationship with other Christians, reflecting the interdependent relationship of the members of the Trinity. We might say that there are two things that one cannot be alone: married, or a Christian. God has designed it so that we need one another in order to hold unwaveringly to our faith, to be encouraged in bearing the fruit and gifts of the Spirit and to have our needs provided for. Because Christians need other Christians to be the Church that God intends, the writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers not to give up their habit of regularly meeting together (Hebrews 10:23–25).

In Ephesians 2:20-22 Paul uses an illustration to describe the blessings we have in the church. In the context, he has referred to the church as a household or nation (v19). Now he refers to it as a temple. See the very similar example in 1 Peter 2:4-8.

He describes the foundation of this temple as the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus being the chief cornerstone. This is like 1 Peter 2:4-8 and Psalm 118:22 where Jesus is also said to be the chief cornerstone. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 3:11 says there can be no foundation other than Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 16:18 where Jesus - not Peter - is the stone on which the church is built).

Acts 2:42 could be considered a purpose statement for the church: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." According to this verse, the purposes/activities of the church should be 1) teaching biblical doctrine, 2) providing a place of fellowship for believers, 3) observing the Lord's supper, and 4) praying.

Class Five

THE CHURCH

The church is to teach biblical doctrine so we can be grounded in our faith. Ephesians 4:14 tells us, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” The church is to be a place of fellowship, where Christians can be devoted to one another and honor one another (Romans 12:10), instruct one another (Romans 15:14), be kind and compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), and most importantly, love one another (1 John 3:11).

The church is to be a place where believers can observe the Lord’s Supper, remembering Christ’s death and shed blood on our behalf (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The concept of “breaking bread” (Acts 2:42) also carries the idea of having meals together. This is another example of the church promoting fellowship. The final purpose of the church according to Acts 2:42 is prayer. The church is to be a place that promotes prayer, teaches prayer, and practices prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 encourages us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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.”

Another commission given to the church is proclaiming the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). The church is called to be faithful in sharing the gospel through word and deed. The church is to be a “lighthouse” in the community, pointing people toward our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The church is to both promote the gospel and prepare its members to proclaim the gospel (1 Peter 3:15).

Class Five

THE CHURCH

Some final purposes of the church are given in James 1:27: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” The church is to be about the business of ministering to those in need. This includes not only sharing the gospel, but also providing for physical needs (food, clothing, shelter) as necessary and appropriate. The church is also to equip believers in Christ with the tools they need to overcome sin and remain free from the pollution of the world. This is done by biblical teaching and Christian fellowship.

So, what is the purpose of the church? Paul gave an excellent illustration to the believers in Corinth. The church is God’s hands, mouth, and feet in this world—the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We are to be doing the things that Jesus Christ would do if He were here physically on the earth.

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

The New Testament teaches that the Church is made up of all who profess faith in Christ, no matter what nationality, gender, or station in life, for the only boundary-marker of the people of God in the New Covenant is the presence of the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11–22; Galatians 3:26–29).

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. If someone were to approach you and say, “I can be a perfectly good Christian and not go to church,” how would you answer?
2. What does it mean to “be the Church”? How have you experienced this at Antioch; or, in what ways would you hope to experience this at Antioch?
3. In your own words, explain what the overarching purpose of the church is.

Class Six

THE SACRAMENTS

WHAT IS A “SACRAMENT”?

A “sacrament” could be defined as a sign and seal of the righteousness we have by faith in our covenant relationship with God (Romans 4:11). We consider a sacrament to be a visible sign of an invisible grace; that is, it is a visual aid of the grace we have received through Christ. At Antioch Baptist Church, we recognize two sacraments: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Both sacraments were instituted by Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 22:14–20) and are specifically for the covenant community of faith. This is why we do not consider rites like marriage to be a sacrament (as important as it is): marriage is a social institution created by God and is for those both within and without the covenant community.

OT PARALLELS TO BAPTISM AND THE LORD’S SUPPER

The Old Testament correspondence to the sacrament of baptism is circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14; 23–27), and the correspondence to the Lord’s Supper is the Passover Meal (Exodus 12:1–27). Circumcision was given as the sign of initiation into the Old Covenant community, while the regular observance of the Passover Meal was to signify a continual renewal of the covenant. In the same way, baptism is the sign of initiation into the New Covenant community (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:26-29), while the Lord’s Supper signifies the regular remembrance and renewal of our covenant with God and each other (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). Thus, baptism and the Lord’s Supper go hand-in-hand: the former as a once-for-all initiation into the covenant community and the latter as the continual renewal of the covenant. Based upon this understanding, the PSC minister who administers the Lord’s Supper to the congregation invites only those who are baptized believers to participate.

VIEW OF BAPTISM AT ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH

Adherents of the Baptist position (“believer baptism”) hold that initiation into the covenant community is only for those who profess faith. The main biblical support for this position is that throughout the New Testament confession of faith and baptism are closely associated (Matthew 28:19–20).

Class Six

THE SACRAMENTS

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is an act of worship and a ceremonial meal in which we remember and renew our covenant relationship with God (vertical aspect) and with our brothers and sisters in Christ (horizontal aspect). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Feast of the Unleavened Bread on the day the Passover Lamb was to be sacrificed (Matthew 26:17–30; Exodus 12:14–20), signifying that he himself would be the true Passover lamb: as the Passover celebration was to remind Israelites of their redemption from Egypt, so the Lord's supper is to remind us of our redemption from death and forgiveness of sin (1 Corinthians 11:23–26). This covenant meal is our regular renewal of faith, or our regular recommitment to the Lord, which is why we examine our hearts before partaking of it. We often hear people speak of "recommitting their lives to the Lord"; we should keep in mind that this is what we do every time we take the Lord's Supper. Regarding the renewal of our covenant relationship with each other, sharing together in the Lord's Supper signifies the commitment we have to one another in the body of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. What is the symbolism of baptism and why is it important to know?
2. What is the symbolism of the Lord's Supper and why is it important to know?
3. In what ways can you deepen your experience of the Lord's Supper as you reflect on its meaning and significance?

Class Seven

VISION AND MINISTRIES OF THE ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH

Antioch Baptist Church exists to “glorify Christ by knowing Him and making him known.”

CORE VALUES

GOSPEL PROCLAMATION—the gospel is the central message of our existence as a church.

PEOPLE TRANSFORMATION—the gospel when correctly applied will create people of excellence who seek to honor God and to draw attention to Him as channels of His grace to others, in whatever situation He has chosen to place them (1 Corinthians 10:31). The gospel is for the whole person, to impact the whole city and reach the whole world.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION—the church as a community in the biblical sense is the redeemed people of God coming together as the Body of Christ. It is people of all walks of life, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, genders, etc. seeking God together, loving one

We are proud of the long history of our church and how we have faithfully proclaimed the gospel of grace for over half of a century. However, we are always seeking to grow and improve.

Currently, the church leadership has identified a list of three critical goals and one overarching goal for our church during this season of our development.

Overarching Goal: To prepare God’s people for the work of ministry so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4).

CRITICAL GOALS

(1) GOSPEL PROCLAMATION

The proclamation of the gospel is necessary in the evangelical emphasis of the church (Romans 10:17; Luke 4:17—21; 2 Corinthians 5:20). Evangelism is the individual and corporate sharing/witnessing of the good news of Jesus Christ under the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Opportunities for evangelism are provided through worship, friendship, service, acts of kindness, etc. (Romans 10:12—25).

(2) DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple is a follower, one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. A Christian disciple is a person who accepts and assists in the spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ. Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome the pressures and trials of this present life and become more and more Christlike. This process requires believers to respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting to examine their thoughts, words and actions and compare them with the Word of God. This requires that we be in the Word daily studying it, praying over it, and obeying it. In addition, we should always be ready to give testimony of the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15) and to disciple others to walk in His way.

Class Seven

VISION AND MINISTRIES OF THE ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH

(3) PRAYER

Prayer is one of the most mysterious aspects of the Christian walk. Prayer is God's invitation to get to know Him. God allows us to approach Him. In fact, He desires it. Prayer is our way of communing with God.

We can exercise the privilege of prayer because Jesus has made a sacrifice for us – He bridges the gap between us and God. Hebrews 4:15-16 refers to Jesus as our High Priest: "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. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Because of Jesus, we are free to pray, and to pray boldly.

Prayer draws us closer to God and is a means by which we praise Him, but it also has an effect in our lives. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." Prayer can lead us to wisdom. First Peter 5:6-7 says, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." Prayer can relieve our anxiety. Matthew 7:7-8 says, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." When we approach God with the desires of our hearts, He answers us (see also Psalm 37:4; John 14:13-14; and 1 John 5:14-15).

Prayer is both an intimate interaction with God and a corporate event. It brings God glory, gives us insight into who He is, and has a tangible effect on our lives. Prayer is a privilege and a spiritual discipline well worth developing.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES, SMALL GROUPS AND CHURCH PROGRAMS

It is a challenge to strive for unity and love in a large church like ours, but if the early church could do it (they numbered over 3,000!), then so can we. They accomplished it by meeting together in smaller numbers in each other's homes. The Small Groups Ministry is crucial to our church, because we cannot hope to reflect the kind of unity and love we ought by simply coming and going to the worship services.

Small Groups provide a context for people to care for and be cared for, to serve and be served, and to grow as disciples of Christ. The Small Groups Ministry seeks to connect all members to groups that meet either at the church or in homes for Bible study, sharing and prayer. If you are not already part of a small group, we urge you to become involved in one—even if it takes more than one try.

Class Seven

VISION AND MINISTRIES OF THE ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH

GIVING OF YOUR RESOURCES: TITHES AND OFFERINGS

One way you may give of your resources is through financial gifts. As is the case with all churches, Antioch Baptist Church depends upon the faithful giving of the people of God to sustain the work to which we believe Christ has called us. Tithing was established by God to help his people acknowledge his ownership and provision of everything they had (1 Chronicles 29:14; Malachi 3:6–12). A tithe was 10% of a person's yearly increase and was set aside as an offering holy to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30–34; Deuteronomy 14:22–23, 28). In the New Testament tithing is affirmed by Jesus (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). Paul speaks about giving in 2 Corinthians 8:1–15 as he describes the example of the Macedonian church. These Christians gave sacrificially even though they were poor because of their trust in God's continued provision for them (vv. 1–6). Paul encouraged the Corinthian church to follow their example and "excel in the grace of giving" (v. 7). Giving is not to be done under compulsion, but out of the overflow of a thankful heart for all God has done for us, and according to our means (vv. 8–15). Our giving is to be the instrument through which God provides for each member in the body of Christ: "at the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need" (v. 14).

We also have additional funds for specific needs, such as the building fund. An important fund to know about is the Benevolence Fund, which is used for those in our congregation experiencing financial crisis or emergency need. Keep your eyes and ears out for fellow members in need, and do not hesitate to bring your own financial needs to Benevolence Committee or Lead Pastor.

Allocating your tithes and offerings

As a member, you will be given envelopes. We encourage you to use these envelopes. On your envelopes, we encourage you to allocate your gifts (i.e.) indicate what the offering is for if the envelope does not expressly state. All gifts in envelopes that are not allocated, as well as all loose gifts (not in envelopes), automatically go into the Ministry and Operations fund. We recommend the following steps:

- 1) Pray
- 2) Determine what percentage of your income you would like to give to Antioch Baptist Church
- 3) Determine the breakdown of your gifts to the church

Class Seven

VISION AND MINISTRIES OF THE ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH

You may also use our website to schedule online giving via credit card or to learn about other ways you can give to the church through stocks or estate planning.

GIVING OF YOUR TIME: OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINISTRY

Since we are all ministers to one another, we encourage you to give of your time to your brothers and sisters in Christ so that you may be a means by which the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to our church.

Prayerfully consider what your next steps should be. Just as the wedding ceremony celebrates the beginning of the covenant of marriage, so the membership joining ceremony marks a new phase of unity and involvement in the church.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW, THOUGHT & DISCUSSION

1. If someone new to Antioch were to ask you what our Vision Statement is, what would you say?
(a) Do you think we are living up to our Vision at Antioch?
(b) Why or why not?
(c) What room do you see for improvement?
(d) How can you be a part of the solution?
2. Why is the Small Groups Ministry so crucial to our church?
(a) Are you part of a small group?
(b) Why or why not?
3. In what ways can you be a better steward of your time and resources as a member of Antioch Baptist Church?
4. If you are not serving in ministry already, in what area of ministry would you be interested in becoming involved?
5. As this class nears its end, spend some time looking over the different ministries of the church. Pray about how you may want to get more involved in the church, if you are not already connected.



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