

YOUR NEXT STEP #1

CONNECTING WITH CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, HERMISTON OREGON

NEXT STEP #1

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT THAT I GET THE GOD THING RIGHT?

TO ANSWER THE QUESTION WE FIRST NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE ALTERNATIVES.

- Either there is a _____ or there isn't.
- Either there is a _____ to life or there isn't.
- Either life _____ or it doesn't.
- If it continues then either it has a _____ or it is an endless _____ of the same.

Deep inside of us there is an awareness that we were made for something more than what we are now experiencing.

We always seem to be looking for something that both _____ to us and _____ us.

So we grab for things like _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____. History, however, and our own experiences tell us that none of these things are the answer.

The truth is: Life is a _____ toward God.

Jesus said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me."*

AND WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

An authentic loving relationship with God would require complete freedom.

NEXT STEP #1

There can be no real freedom without choice, and with choice there is always the possibility of making the wrong choice. If you don't have the freedom to _____, there would be no real freedom.

So the same freedom that we have to chose God also opens the door for evil to _____.

John 8:34 says, (NIV) *"Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

How can God make it so we can enjoy real freedom for _____ without any contamination of evil?

How can God destroy evil without destroying either _____ or our _____?

THE GREAT FREEDOM PROJECT

Out of love God created the heavens and the earth with the intent of sharing all he has with us as his children.

He gave us the freedom of choice. We can choose to live for him and with him. or we can choose to live for ourselves and be separate from him.

Genesis 2:16-17 "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

Galatians 5:1 "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

He knew that our freedom would draw evil out in reaction to his good. He knew we would be tempted. He knew what we would choose. He knew what the wrong choice

NEXT STEP #1

would do to us. And he knew that our flesh is too weak to defeat evil and overcome death.

He knew it would take one like us, but stronger than us, who would be able to defeat death and overcome evil by the power of love.

Romans 5:8 "...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Ephesians 1:7 (ESV) "In Christ we were made free by his blood sacrifice. We have forgiveness of sins because of God's rich grace."

The apostle Paul put it like this in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*

And in Ephesians 2:8 Paul says, *"For by grace you have been saved by faith. And this is not of your own doing; it is the gift of God."*

Because we are all saved by grace no one can boast. All comparisons and all competitions are removed. Everyone gets the same amount of love and mercy. It is all unconditional. It is all a free gift.

If Jesus is just another human like the rest of us, then his exclusive claim is unfair. But if he is truly the Son of God then he is greater than us and his claim has authority. Christianity differs from all other faiths because it doesn't begin with our speculations but with God's revelation. At the center of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ. If there is no Jesus there is no Christianity.

That is why we are baptized not into a _____ but into Jesus Christ the _____.

Church membership is not in an _____, nor is it in an _____.
It means _____ in the body of Christ.

NEXT STEP #1

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

We believe in God the Father the maker and giver of all life, in Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God and savior of the world, and in the Holy Spirit as God with us empowering us and bringing us to completion in Christ.

We believe that Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, and we believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

We believe in Jesus Christ as Lord of all life, and the he is the head of the church his body.

We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and is useful for teaching us the truth, showing us where we are wrong, correcting our wrongs, and sustaining us on our way.

We believe in eternal life is a life lived in relationship to God through Jesus. We believe that the Church is for all people in all places. We believe that there is always room for one more.

We believe that Jesus will come again to bring complete justice through fair judgment, and to remove all the causes of evil.

AS A CHRISTIAN CHURCH:

We believe we should be christians only, but we don't believe we are the only christians.

We believe in no creed but Christ.

We believe that in Christ we have unity, in our opinions we have freedom, and in all the rest we have love.

We believe the Bible is our guide in all matters of faith and conduct.

NEXT STEP #1

WHAT IS YOUR NEXT STEP?

If life is a journey then every step we take is important but even more important is the direction we are going.

Do you believe there is a God who created you and who loves you? If you do what is your next step? If you don't are you ready to do some real investigating about it?

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and the savior of the whole world? If you do then what is your next step? If you don't are you ready to do some real investigating?

Are you ready to take the next step? Baptism? Membership? We hope what follows will be helpful.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED INTO JESUS?

Romans 6:3-4 "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."

If you have been baptized did you at the time fully understand that you were being baptized into the person of Jesus?

Do you want to be baptized into Christ? At the end of the workbook you will have an opportunity to make that commitment.

NEXT STEP #1

WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

- To follow the example set by _____.

Mark 1:9 *"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."*

- Because Christ _____ it

Matthew 28:19-20 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

- Because it _____ my faith

Acts 18:8 *"...many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized."*

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

It is God's way of connecting me to the _____, _____, and _____ of Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 *"...Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..."*

Baptism is an _____ symbol of our _____.

A symbol is an _____ - representation of a _____.

God has given us a simple way to participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

When you are laid backwards in the water you are yielding your life to another. And if you imagine a cross on the bottom of the baptistry you realize that you are nailing the old person and past to the cross of Christ.

NEXT STEP #1

As you are under the water you hold your breath and for a moment it is like being buried in the tomb with Jesus.

As you come up out of the water and take a new breath of air, and as you break free from the surface of the water it is like being raised.

You have been crucified with Christ. You have been buried with Christ, and you have been raised with Christ.

WHY DO WE ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BE IMMersed?

- Because that is what the word, _____ means. The word baptize means to _____. We get our word rain from it. Baptize means to wash completely and was used in Jesus' day for things like washing the dishes or doing the laundry.
- Because every baptism in the _____ was by immersion.

Acts 8:38-39 *"...they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water..."*

- Because immersion best symbolizes a death, burial and resurrection.

Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

SHOULD I BE IMMersed EVEN IF I WAS SPRINKLED AS A BABY?

Yes, and only if you can say, "My parents had me sprinkled out of love for both God and his church. They did it with full conviction and understanding, with the hope that I would grow up to share their faith in God." Yes, if you can say, "If it wasn't for my parent's love and guidance I might not even be seeking this today."

NEXT STEP #1

Yes, if you are doing it: to experience God's grace in your own life. To move forward in your faith. To assure yourself of your own obedience.

And yes if you can say, "I am doing this as my personal response and obedience to Jesus."

WHAT MEMBERSHIP OR BELONGING TO THE CHURCH IS ALL ABOUT

- Membership is something God _____ and we _____.

1 Corinthians 12:18 *"But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose."*

- Membership is mutual participation in the _____ of _____.

Ephesians 4:11-13 *"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..."*

Jesus appoints people to a _____ and gives them _____ to accomplish their work.

The role of the leaders is to _____ the membership for the work of ministry.

The role of members is to do the work of ministry.

Together the body of Christ is built up in love.

God has _____ and has placed us in the church, where he wants us and is using all of our _____ in order to make a difference in the world.

Romans 12:6 *"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...in proportion to our faith..."*

NEXT STEP #1

Each gift is given for the_____.

1 Peter 4:10 *“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.”*

REASONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

- We are _____.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

- Together we become a model of _____.

1 Corinthians 12:12 *“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”*

- Together we display _____ to the whole world.

Ephesians 3:10 *“...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.”*

- Together we celebrate in _____ like no other way can.

Hebrews 12:22-24 *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly[a] of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”*

NEXT STEP #1

- We need each other to reach _____.

Ephesians 4:16 "...from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A MEMBER?

At FCC we are committed to providing a safe place for people to come and explore a relationship with Jesus. We only ask you to do what the Bible expects every Christian to do.

- I will commit myself to helping make FCC a safe place...by refusing to gossip, by rejecting judgments and hostility, by treating others the way I would want them to treat me. by believing the best about others and seeking the best for them.
- I will share in the life of my church...by praying for its health, by inviting others to visit, and by welcoming those who visit.
- I will serve in my church...by discovering my gifts (Next step #2), by experimenting to see where I best fit.
- I will support the testimony of my church...by being a witness through my attendance, by my reputation in the community, and by my giving.

NEXT STEP #1

YOUR MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION