

B.E.L.O.N.G.

Summerville Church of Christ
Discipleship Training

Our Identity

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

OVERVIEW

Each letter in **BELONG** points to how we connect to God and each other.

B.E.L.O.N.G.

- B. baptism is essential for salvation (Acts 2:38-39)
- E. exalt Christ in everything we do (Philippians 1:20)
- L. love one another as God loves us (1 John 3:1,18))
- O. One in faith and doctrine (Ephesians 4:3-6))
- N. New life by walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:5b; Ephesians 4:24))
- G. Go into the world and preach the gospel (Matthew 28:19)

Each letter in **GROW** points to how God wants us to pursue discipleship.

G.R.O.W.

- G. grow in and by grace (2 Peter 3:18)
- R. repentance (2 Timothy 2:25)
- O. obedience (2 John 1:6))
- W. Word of God working in us (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Each letter in **SERVE** points to how in serving we are the hands and feet of Jesus

S.E.R.V.E.

- S. strengths (Philippians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 12:18)
- E. excel (2 Corinthians 8:7)
- R. rewarding (Colossians 3:23-24)
- V. victory (1 John 5:3)
- E. example (Matthew 20:28; Titus 2:7)

Each letter in **SHARE** points to the importance of fulfilling and staying on the mission of preaching the gospel to the world.

S.H.A.R.E.

- S. seek (Acts 17:27)
- H. harvest (Luke 10:1-2)
- A. ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- R. rejoicing (Luke 15:7)
- E. eternal life (1 John 5:11)

B.E.L.O.N.G.
(Connecting to God and to each other)

B (Baptism is essential for salvation)

KEY VERSE: Acts 2:38-39

Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and all of you who are far off- for all whom the Lord our God will call.

1. The first place anyone must begin is belief that the scriptures are from God and did not originate with human authors.

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20-21

2. Scriptures teach that God wants me to be part of His eternal family.

God did this so that men would *seek him* and perhaps *reach out for him* and find him, though he is *not far* from each one of us. **Acts 17:27**

For God so *loved* the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. **John 3:16**

He is *patient* with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but *everyone* to come to *repentance*. **2 Peter 3:9**

The *promise* is for you and your children and for all who are far off- for all whom the Lord our God will *call*. **Acts 2:39**

But God demonstrates *his own love* for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8**

3. I am separated from God because of my sin.

But your iniquities have separated you from God. **Isaiah 59:2**

Blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Psalm 51:1b-2

Transgressions: the breaking of God's laws.

Iniquity: evil thoughts and actions

Sin: missing the mark. Like shooting an arrow at a target and missing the target.

There is no one righteous, not even one; **Romans 3:10**

4. Through faith in Jesus Christ I am connected back to God and to each other in the church.

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions- it is by grace you have been saved by faith. **Ephesians 2:4-5**

There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. **Romans 3:22b-25a**

5. The command to be baptized (immersed) came from Jesus.

Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... **Matthew 28:19**

Key Points regarding Baptism:

People are saved (and get to go to heaven) by believing that Jesus is the Christ and putting their faith in Him and being baptized into his name for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Salvation (being saved) and baptism are always tied together.

What is baptism?

The process of baptism is very simple. You begin by standing, sitting, or kneeling in some water. Another Christian then lowers you under the water and then brings you back up out of the water. You could also literally call this "immersion."

Because some faiths sprinkle water on people instead of immersing them, the obvious question is whether this is OK. Nowhere in the New Testament does anything but "immersion" take place. That is, baptism is always by immersion.

“Baptize” is a transliteration of the original Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo). In turn, *baptizo* comes from the root word βαπτω (bapto), a term used in the first century for immersing a garment first into bleach and then into dye, both cleansing and changing the color of the cloth. (Note its similarity to baptism's cleansing of sin and becoming a new person through Christ.) Stated another way, when you process cloth to change its color, you are said to “baptize” it. If sprinkling of any kind was to be practiced, a different Greek word would have been used, but it was not.

When should someone be baptized?

#A – Is there a certain age?

A natural question would be, “does your age make a difference?” More specifically, you may ask whether infants or young children should be baptized. It may help if you understand where the idea and practice of baptizing infants came from. Around 400 AD, a man named Augustine came up with the idea of “original sin.” This basically said that everyone inherits the sin of Adam at birth and is therefore separated from God from the beginning of their life. Of course, this caused parents to become concerned over the fate of their children, should they die before “getting right with God.” They decided to baptize them to “take care of the original sin.” Since it is risky to immerse an infant, these people decided to sprinkle them with water instead. Thus, both baptizing infants and baptizing by sprinkling came from human ideas. They did not come from the Bible.

If we look in the Bible we see that children are never seen to “accept Christ” (and therefore get right with God). A child is safe in the arms of God until they can understand how to be saved by accepting Jesus as their savior. (See 2 Samuel chapter 12, verses 22 and 23 along with Matthew chapter 18, verse 10.) Adults and children (who can understand separation from God because of sin and so forth) are at the age when acceptance of Christ is possible. It is difficult to pinpoint that age because God calls people at different ages. For example, the New Testament shows that Lydia and members of her household were baptized (Acts 16:15) as well as the jailor and his family household (Acts 16:31-33).

#B – Is there a certain time?

The New Testament examples of baptism indicate that people responded to the gospel call by being immediately baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. At Summerville Church of Christ, we encourage people to be baptized as soon as possible- during worship, after worship, anytime, any day of the week.

#C - What should I bring?

The Baptism dressing rooms have baptismal clothes and towels for you to use. You can also bring your own set of clothes if you prefer. Hair dryers are also available. Family

and friends can also come up and take pictures of your baptism but the hallway leading to the baptismal pool is narrow so it is recommended just a few people come into the baptismal area.

Oh course, you do not have to be baptized just in the baptismal pool at the building. Wherever there is enough water to immerse your entire body is fine.

6. Baptism (immersion) in the name of Jesus Christ brings forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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

The command to be baptized was not just for the Jews or a localized region but for **everyone (Acts 2:8-11)**.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth **(Acts 1:8)**

On the day of **Pentecost**, Jews from many parts of the world we gathered, heard the message about Jesus Christ, and when asked what they were suppose to do, were the given the same command to repent and be baptized **(Acts 2:22-41)**.

When the mission spread to **Samaria**, they were also baptized.

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

Gentiles were also baptized.

When the gospel message went to the Gentile household of Cornelius, the apostle Peter was initially reluctant to be the carrier of the message. After being convinced by an angel (Acts 10:9-), Peter preached to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:44). The speaking in tongues gift fell upon Cornelius and his household, just as it had done for those in Jerusalem (Acts 2:2ff).

Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Saul, a persecutor of the church, had a dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, where he lost his eyesight (**Acts 9:1-19**). When Paul recounts his conversion story later, he gives us the instructions Ananias gave him in regards to forgiveness of sins.

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name (**Acts 22:16**).

The Ethiopian Eunuch, on his way home from Jerusalem, is reading from Isaiah about the Messiah but does not understand what he is reading. Miraculously, God sends Philip to explain to him the Scriptures (**Acts 8:26-34**).

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him (**Acts 8:35-38**).

Lydia was baptized when she heard the teachings by Paul (Acts 16:11-15)

The Jailer was baptized after Paul and Silas told him what he needed to be saved (Acts 16:22-34).

7. PICTURES OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Putting on New Clothes

All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (**Galatians 3:27-28**)

Pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead (**Colossians 2:12**)

New Life

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

Birth

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (**John 3:5**)

Noah's Ark

. . . in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves (**1 Peter 3:20-21**)

Washing

And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name (**Acts 22:16**).

8. I am connected by baptism to God and His church.

The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (**Acts 2:47b**).

Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (**Romans 8:17**).

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (**1 Corinthians 11:27**).

Our Identity

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other as the church), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

B.E.L.O.N.G.

(Connecting to God and to each other as the church)

E (Exalt Christ in everything)

KEY VERSE: Philippians 1:20

I eagerly expect and hope, that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether in life, or by death.

The first place anyone must begin is belief that the scriptures are inspired (God-breathed) and serve the purpose of preparing us for our purpose.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. **2 Timothy 3:16**

People respond to Jesus by _____

1. rejecting him as Lord and Savior.
2. finding him interesting and unique.
3. viewing him as historically significant (i.e. the impact of Christianity upon the Roman Empire and the European tribes).
4. categorizing him as just another teacher, prophet, guru, or holy man.
5. regarding him as a threat to world peace (The sole claim of Jesus as the only way for salvation makes many view Christians as intolerant, and, therefore, in conflict, with the global desire of world peace.
6. believe He is who He says He is (but there is not outward or inner conviction of that that belief. Remember, demons believe in Jesus- more so than most people who claim to believe in Jesus.
7. surrendering to His Lordship.

I. Some Reasons to Exalt Christ in everything

A. I exalt Christ because He is God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **(John 1:1)**

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. 4 So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"? 6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him." 7 In speaking of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, his servants flames of fire." 8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom **(Hebrews 1:3-8)**."

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever **(Hebrews 13:8)**.

B. I exalt Christ because He is Creator

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made **(John 1:3)**.

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together **(Colossians 1:16-17)**.

C. I exalt Christ because He is Head of the Church

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy **(Colossians 1:18)**.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way **(Ephesians 1:22-23)**.

D. I exalt Christ because He is THE Way, THE truth, and THE Life

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" **(John 14:5-7)**.

E. I exalt Christ because He is Savior

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” **(Acts 4:12)**.

F. I exalt Christ because He is LORD of lords and KING of kings

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” **(Revelation 14:7)**

*Being the LORD and KING of an eternal Kingdom, he extends a **rich welcome** to those who will follow him.*

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ **(2 Peter 1:10-11)**.

*A strong defense is needed in order to have peace within a country. Jesus as the LORD and KING is strong enough to **ensure eternal peace**.*

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all **(Acts 10:36)**.

*Jesus is not just a national, ethnic, or regional king. **He is LORD and KING of everyone!***

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” **(Romans 10:12)**.

G. I exalt Christ because of His Superior Name

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name **(Philippians 2:9)**.

So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs **(Hebrews 1:4)**.

*We are **baptized (immersed)** into the name of Jesus (See “Baptism is essential for salvation” under B.E.L.O.N.G.)*

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

*We **gather** in the name of Jesus.*

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” **(Matthew 18:20)**.

*We **ask** in the name of Jesus according to the will of God*

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it **(John 14:13-14)**.

II. Some Ways I exalt Christ

A. In Worship

In a loud voice they sang: “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped **(Revelation 5:12-14)**.

B. Giving Him Honor

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen **(1 Timothy 1:15-17)**.

C. With my Attitude

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness **(Philippians 2:4-7)**.

D. In my Heart and Mind

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God **(Colossians 3:1-3)**.

E. Through humble service

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them **(John 13:15-17)**.

F. By bearing fruit

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples **(John 15:8)**.

G. Through Transformation, becoming more like Jesus

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit **(2 Corinthians 3:18)**.

H. When I suffer for the cause of Christ

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name **(Acts 5:41)**.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us **(Romans 5:1-5)**.

I. In Everything

And whatever you do, whether in words or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him **(Colossians 3:17)**.

Our Identity

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other as the church), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

B.E.L.O.N.G.

(Connecting to God and to each other as the church)

L (Love others the way God loves us)

KEY VERSE: 1 John 3:1

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And this is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know God.

1 John 3:1

The love God is

1. Pure
2. Perfect
3. Persistent
4. Powerful
5. Permanent

Everything God does is done in love.

The first place anyone must begin is belief that the scriptures are inspired (God-breathed) and serve the purpose of preparing us for our purpose.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. **Hebrews 4:12**

I. Defining Love

A. God is love

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 1 John 4:16

B. Paul's Description of love in action.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (**1 Corinthians 13:3-7**).

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love (**1 Corinthians 13:13**).

II. The Love of God is:

A. Lavished Upon Us

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him (**1 John 3:1**).

B. Poured Out upon us

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (**Romans 5:5**).

C. Deep

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ (**Ephesians 3:17-18**).

D. A Gift

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (**John 3:16**).

E. Sacrificial

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (**Romans 5:8**).

F. Amazing

However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” (**1 Corinthians 2:9**).

G. Purposeful

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose **(Romans 8:28)**.

H. Conquering and Permanent

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord **(Romans 8:37-39)**.

III. The Priority of love:

A. Fulfills the law

The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law **(Romans 13:9-10)**.

B. Greatest Command

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment **(Matthew 22:37-38)**

C. Builds Up

We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up **(1 Corinthians 8:1)**. The context is that the church is arguing over the issue of food offered to idols. Their arguments over the issue are causing division and hurt. Paul’s point is the use of knowledge without love leads to arrogance and division. Love is the key ingredient in resolving disputes.

D. Faith expressed in love

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love **(Galatians 5:6)**. Again, a key dividing issue among Christians in the first century church was whether or not a Gentile (non-Jew) had to be

circumcised in order to be a Christian. Paul's points to faith that must be expressed in love.

IV. Love others the way God loves us by

A. I am to love my neighbor

The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law **(Romans 13:9-10)**.

B. I am to love my enemies

But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked **(Luke 6:35)**

C. I am to increase and abound in love

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you **(1 Thessalonians 3:12)**

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight **(Philippians 1:9)**.

D. I am to speak the truth in love

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ **(Ephesians 4:15)**

E. I am compelled by the love of Christ

If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again **(2 Corinthians 5:13-15)**

F. I am to bear with others in love

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love **(Ephesians 4:2)**.

G. I am to love deeply

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins **(1 Peter 4:8)**

H. I am to walk in love

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love **(2 John 1:6)**

Our Identity **ONE IN DOCTRINE AND UNITY**

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other as the church), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

B.E.L.O.N.G. **(Connecting to God and to each other as the church)**

O (One in doctrine and Unity)

KEY VERSE: Ephesians 4:3-6

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope, when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6

The first place anyone must begin is belief that the scriptures are inspired (God-breathed) and serve the purpose of preparing us for our purpose.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts toward God. **Colossians 3:16**

I. Don't Confuse Unity with Uniformity

A. Uniformity

Driven by fear, compliance, and control. Think of the examples of the Pharisees, who fearful of breaking one of God's laws, created hundreds of man-made rules that they required everyone to additionally follow. Jesus said to them, "Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7:13)

B. Unity

Motivated by grace, being Christ-like, trust, and grace. Paul told the Ephesians, "... speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does it work" (Ephesians 4: 15-16)

II. Being One Was A Central Part of Jesus' Prayer For His Disciples

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: (John 17:20-22).

A. One in Doctrine

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Ephesians 4:3-6).

B. One in Function

1. As the Body

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

2. As a Worker

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

C. In my Focus

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14).

D. In Purpose

The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor (1 Corinthians 3:8).

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds (1 Corinthians 3:10).

E. In my Gifts

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms (1 Peter 4:10).

F. In my Fellowship as Church

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need (Acts 4:32-35).

G. In Maturity

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

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. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).

III. One In Relationships

1. Devotion and Honor

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10).

2. Harmony

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited (Romans 12:16) Note: Unison is everyone singing the same notes. Harmony is when different notes are arranged to create a beautiful melody. God does not want uniformed unison but unity through harmony; holding up the doctrines as one and then accepting and encouraging each other as God has made us and given us different personalities, gifts, talents, experiences, etc. In essentials = one, in non-essentials= harmony.

3. Love

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law (Romans 13:8)

4. Acceptance

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7).

5. Instruction

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another (Romans 15:14).

6. Compassion and Forgiveness

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13).

7. Admonish

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16).

8. Encourage

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Hebrews 3:13).

9. Humility

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

10. Walk

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7)

Our Identity New Life in the Spirit

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other as the church), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

B.E.L.O.N.G. (Connecting to God and to each other as the church)

N (New Life in the Spirit)

KEY VERSE: Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:16-17

I. New Life Begins with a faith in Christ that leads us to be baptized into his name (See lesson one: baptism in BELONG for additional information).

A. Delivered

Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2)

B. Old Life Dilemma: Death and no escape

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as slave to sin (Romans 7:13-14).

C. Old Life Dilemma: Contradiction

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good (Romans 7:15-16).

D. Old Life Dilemma: Frustration

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me (Romans 7:17).

E. Old Life Dilemma: Hopelessness

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do —this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it (Romans 7:18-20).

F. The Grasp of Sin: Works

So I find this law at work: When I want to good, evil is right there with me (Romans 7:21).

G. The Grasp of Sin: Wars

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members (Romans 7:22-23).

H. The Grasp of Sin: Wretchedness

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death (Romans 7:24)?

I. The Grasp of Sin: Weakened

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering (Romans 8:03).

II. The Promised New Life

A. Delivered

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 7:24-25)!

B. Freedom

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).

C. Spiritual Mindset and Desires

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:5).

D. Alive

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires (Romans 8:11).

E. Children

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of son-ship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children (Romans 8:16).

F. Heirs

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:16-17)

G. Hope

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

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. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).

H. Intercession

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will (Romans 8:26-27)

I. Purpose

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28)

J. Assurance

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

K. Love

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our Identity **GO**

God calls the church to do four things: BELONG (connect to God and to each other as the church), GROW (pursue discipleship), SERVE (to be the hands and feet of Jesus), and to SHARE (fulfilling the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world).

B.E.L.O.N.G. **(Connecting to God and to each other as the church)**

G (GO)

KEY VERSE: Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

I. We GO under and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

A. TRUTH

He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1)
They set out and went from village to village preaching the gospel (Luke 9:6)

B. FREEDOM

He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons (Luke 9:1)

C. HELP

He gave them power and authority to ... heal the sick (Luke 9:1)
They set out ... preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere (Luke 9:6)

II. Opportunities abound to share Jesus with others

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The *harvest* is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to *send out workers* into his harvest field
Luke 10:1-2

- A. Harvest Work: Go in peace**
“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ (6) If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you.
Luke 10:5a, 6
- B. Harvest Work: Relational**
(7) Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. (8) “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Luke 10:7-8
- C. Harvest Work: Helpful**
Heal the sick who are there. Luke 10:9a
- D. Harvest Work: Rooted in Truth**
Heal the sick who are there and tell them, “The kingdom of God is near you.” ... He who listens to you listens to me;
Luke 10:9,16

III. Going into the world takes on different forms

- A. God might send you to a different geographical location.**
Abram had lived in the land of his ancestors all his life. Then suddenly, God called Abram to a new geographical location. Abram obeyed and trusted God, and in faith, went to the new land to accomplish the Father’s will. Maybe you have been called to leave your familiar geographical location: it might be to a foreign mission, but more than likely, it be going off to college in a new city, a job change, retirement, etc. Look at every new move as an opportunity of God calling you to “go” to another part of the world.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. ”
So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran (Genesis 12:1-4).

B. It might be that you need courage to go to friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.

If you feel you lack some courage when it comes to telling the people around you about Jesus, take heart! Did you know Moses, struggled with a lack of confidence as well? Read the story below and see how God encouraged and strengthen Moses. He will do the same for you.

So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers —the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob —has sent me to you.’ “This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. “Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. (Genesis 12:1-4).

C. Be ready to share your story of salvation with others.

A powerful way to reach others for Jesus is to tell them your personal story of salvation. Set aside some time and outline your thoughts and ideas around the question, “Why did I become a Christian.” You will discover that people drawn to your personal experience, will then be more open to scriptures about salvation. Look at the example of Isaiah as he shares his personal encounter with God.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:” Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.” Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken

away and your sin atoned for. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people . . . (Isaiah 6:1-9a)

IV. Jesus promises to be with us as we go into the world.

And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age"
Matthew 28:20

What a great promise from Jesus. He not only commissions us but is with us in our mission. His grace and power empowers our actions to go into the world, knowing that he is always with us. The commissioning of his disciples to go into their world (Luke 10), motivates us to do the same.

- A. Jesus reminds us that there are many who are searching for him, even if they do not know it.
 - a. The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Luke 10:2).
 - b. Go, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3). Jesus reminds us that evangelism takes courage because you are engaging in spiritual warfare. The devil wants people to remain blind to the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. But note, Jesus tells us to have a gentle spirit- "lamb among wolves." Avoid judgmental attitudes and harsh condemnation of others. Instead, point others to the love and mercy of God.
 - c. Remember, our victory in spiritual warfare is all-dependent upon Jesus. Do not be filled with spiritual arrogance or pride. Jesus must have sensed that the disciples in their rejoicing over spiritual warfare victories, needed to regroup and refocus on him.

He (Jesus) replied, "I saw Satan fall from like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority over ... do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:16,20).