

STARTING OUT
YOUR LIFE JOURNEY

GRANDE PRAIRIE
ALLIANCE CHURCH

Participant Guide

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WELCOME TO

STARTING OUT YOUR LIFE JOURNEY

at

GRANDE PRAIRIE ALLIANCE CHURCH

We're glad you've chosen to find out more about your relationship with God and first steps to living your life in relationship with Him.

THE BASIS FOR THIS CLASS:

"...You are a member of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian." **Ephesians 2:19 (LB)**

Key Truths:

1. The church is _____.
2. We become members of God's family through a free gift of _____.
3. We _____ and _____ our family relationship with each other.

THE GOAL OF THIS CLASS:

...That I will confirm and commit myself to my relationship with Jesus by salvation and symbolically share my experience with others through baptism.

OUR SALVATION

“For now we are all children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, and we who have been baptized into union with Christ are enveloped by Him. We are no longer Jews or Gentiles, or slaves or free men, or even merely men or women, but we are all the same – we are Christians; we are one in Jesus Christ!” **Galatians 3:26-28 (LB)**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Most people live their entire lives without ever knowing “WHY THEY EXIST?” They exist year after year with no idea of why they live or God’s purpose for their lives. The most basic question a person can ask is, “What is the meaning of my life?”

Everyone wants to be happy. People try many ways:

- ... Some look for happiness by **acquiring possessions**.
- ... Some look for happiness by **experiencing pleasure**.
- ... Some look for happiness by **gaining prestige & power**.

But real happiness comes from understanding my _____.

I. WHY AM I HERE?

1. GOD MADE ME TO _____ ME!

God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love!” **Jeremiah 31:3**

“Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be His through our union with Christ...**because of His love**, God had already decided that through Jesus Christ He would make us His children – this was God’s pleasure and purpose.”

Ephesians 1:4-5 (GN)

2. WE WERE CREATED TO _____ A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND TO _____ ALL OF THE REST OF GOD’S CREATION! THIS MAKES US SPECIAL!

“So God created human beings, making them in His image. He blessed them, and said ...live all over the earth and bring it under control. I am putting you in charge.”

Genesis 1:27-28 (LB)

“God richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” **I Timothy 6:17**

Jesus said, “I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness!”

John 10:10

3. WHEN WE KNOW AND LOVE GOD, AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH HIS PURPOSE FOR OUR LIVES, IT PRODUCES TREMENDOUS BENEFITS IN OUR LIVES:

Clear Conscience
Romans 8:1

Life & Peace
Romans 8:6

Help with Weakness
Romans 8:26

Purpose
Romans 8:28

Confidence
Romans 8:31

Security
Romans 8:39

Power & Strength
Philippians 4:13

Fulfilment
Philippians 4:19

Freedom
John 8:32,36

This is the kind of lifestyle God intends for us to live. Why then aren't most people really happy?

II. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Man has a natural desire to _____ and to ignore God's principles for living.

"Look out for #1. Do your own thing."

"If it feels good, do it – regardless of what God says about it."

"It's my life and I'll do what I please!"

THE BIBLE CALLS THIS ATTITUDE: _____.

"All of us, like sheep, have gone astray, and each of us has turned to his own way."
Isaiah 53:6

"If we say that we never sin, we are only fooling ourselves, and refuse to accept the truth." **1 John 1:8**

Sin breaks our close relationship with God. It causes us to fear God and try to live our lives outside of His will.

"The trouble is that your sins have cut you off from God." **Isaiah 59:2 (LB)**

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air.
Ephesians 2:1-2

"All have sinned and fall short of God's glorious ideal." **Romans 3:23**

When our relationship to God is not right, it causes PROBLEMS in every area of our lives – marriage, career, relationships, finances, etc.

WHEN PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS, THEY OFTEN TRY MANY DIFFERENT WAYS OF COPING BEFORE TURNING TO GOD.

“There are ways that SEEM right to man, but they only end in death.” **Proverbs 16:25**

Even when we know that our deepest need is God, we often try wrong ways of getting to know Him:

- “My mother was a Christian so...”
- “It doesn’t matter what you believe, just be sincere.”
- “I’ll give up all my bad habits.”
- “I’ll work real hard and earn it.”
- “I’ll be religious and go to church.”

III. WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

Jesus Christ said, “**I Am THE WAY**, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except **THROUGH ME!**” **John 14:6**

God Himself came to earth as a human being to bring us back to Himself. If any other way would have worked, Jesus Christ would not have had to come. The Way is a Person!

JESUS HAS ALREADY TAKEN CARE OF YOUR SIN PROBLEM!

“The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” **Romans 6:23**

God did this for us because He loves us and wants us to know Him.

“God demonstrated His love for us in that while we were still separated from God by sin, Christ died for us.” **Romans 5:8**

“God is on one side and all people are on the other side, and Christ Jesus is between them to bring them together, by giving His life for all mankind.” **I Timothy 2:5**

God has already done His part to restore our relationship to Him. He took the initiative. Now He waits for each of us to individually accept what He has done for us.

IV. WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

1. _____ **THAT GOD HAS NOT BEEN FIRST PLACE IN YOUR LIFE AND ASK HIM TO FORGIVE YOUR SINS.**

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from every wrong.” **1 John 1:9**

2. _____ **THAT JESUS DIED TO PAY FOR YOUR SINS AND THAT HE ROSE AGAIN ON EASTER, AND IS ALIVE TODAY.**

“If you confess that Jesus is your Lord, and you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” **Romans 10:9**

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) by which we must be saved.” **Acts 4:12**

3. _____ **GOD’S FREE GIFT OF SALVATION. DON’T TRY TO EARN IT.**

“For it is by grace you are saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**

Our relationship to God is not restored by anything we do, but on the basis of what Jesus already did for us!

4. _____ **JESUS CHRIST TO COME INTO YOUR LIFE AND BE THE DIRECTOR (“LORD”) OF YOUR LIFE.**

“To all who receive Him, He gives the right to become children of God. All we need to do is to trust Him to save us. All those who believe this are reborn! – not a physical rebirth... but from the will of God!” **John 1:12-13**

“Jesus says, ‘Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in...’” **Revelation 3:20**

5. _____ **FROM YOUR OLD LIFE AND BEGIN YOUR NEW LIFE.**

“Now change your mind and attitude to God and turn to him so He can cleanse away your sins and send you wonderful times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord.” **Acts 3:19**

“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. He is not the same any more. A new life has begun!” **2 Corinthians 5:17**

YOU CAN TAKE THESE STEPS BY PRAYING A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST:

“Dear Jesus, thank you for making me and loving me, even when I’ve ignored you and gone my own way. I realize I need you in my life and I’m sorry for my sins. I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for dying on the cross for me. I choose to follow you from now on. Please come into my life and make me a new person inside. I accept your gift of salvation. I accept you now as my Lord and Savior. Please help me to grow now as a Christian.”

“Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” **Romans 10:13**

BAPTISM

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BAPTIZED

I. WHY SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

1. TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE SET BY _____.

“At that time Jesus came from Nazareth and was baptized by John in the river.”

Mark 1:9

2. BECAUSE CHRIST _____ IT.

“Jesus said, ‘Go then, to all people everywhere and make them my disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and then teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.’” **Matthew 28:19-20**

3. IT DEMONSTRATES THAT I REALLY AM A _____.

“...many of the people who heard Him believed and were baptized.” **Acts 18:8**

“We know that we have come to know Him, if we obey His commands.” **1 John 2:3**

II. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

1. IT ILLUSTRATES CHRIST’S _____ AND RESURRECTION.

“Christ died for our sins... He was buried... and He rose again.” **1 Corinthians 15:3-4**

“For when you were baptized, you were buried with Christ, and in baptism you were also raised with Christ.” **Colossians 2:12**

2. IT ILLUSTRATES MY _____ AS A CHRISTIAN.

“When someone becomes a Christian he becomes a brand new person inside. The old life has passed away and a new life has begun!” **2 Corinthians 5:17**

“By our baptism then, we were buried with Him and shared His death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...so also we may live a new life! **Romans 6:4**

Baptism doesn’t make you a believer – it shows that you already believe. Baptism does not “save” you, only your faith in Christ does that. Baptism is like a wedding ring – it’s the outward symbol of the commitment you made in your heart.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith...it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**

III. WHY BE BAPTIZED BY IMMERSION?

BECAUSE _____ WAS BAPTIZED THAT WAY.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water.” **Matthew 3:16**

EVERY BAPTISM IN THE _____ WAS BY IMMERSION.

(Example) “...then both Philip and the man went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...” **Acts 8:38-39**

THE WORD “BAPTIZE” MEANS “TO _____ WATER”.

The Greek word baptizo means “to immerse or dip under water”.

IT BEST SYMBOLIZES A BURIAL AND RESURRECTION!

The founders of denominations agree:

Martin Luther... “I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and the mystery signifies.”

John Calvin... “The word ‘baptize’ signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

John Wesley... “Buried with Him, alludes to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church.”

IV. WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

EVERY PERSON WHO HAS _____ IN CHRIST.

“Those who believed and accepted His message were baptized...” **Acts 2:41**

“Simon himself believed and was baptized...” **Acts 8:13**

“But when they believed Philip as he preached the Good News...and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” **Acts 8:12**

BELIEVER’S BAPTISM

At GPAC, we wait until our children are old enough to believe and understand the true meaning of baptism before we baptize them.

Some churches practice a “baptism of confirmation” for children. This ceremony is intended to be a covenant between the parents and God on the behalf of the child. The parents promise to raise their child in the faith until the child is old enough to make his own personal confession of Christ. This custom began about 300 years after the Bible was completed.

This is different from the baptism talked about in the Bible which was only for those old enough to believe. The purpose is to publicly confess your personal commitment to Christ.

At GPAC, it is a membership requirement that every member must have been baptized.

V. WHEN SHOULD I BE BAPTIZED?

AS SOON AS YOU _____!

“Those who believed...were baptized...that day!” **Acts 2:41**

“Then Philip began with the scripture and told him the Good News about Jesus. As they travelled along the road, they came to some water, and the man said, ‘Look, here is water! Why shouldn’t I be baptized right now?’ Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ The man answered, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So they went down into the water and Philip baptized him.” **Acts 8:35-38**

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

VI. BAPTISM DAY

Be Assured:

There will be people praying for you. You may feel apprehensive, but God will give your strength and grace at this important spiritual step. We encourage you to invite all your relatives and friends to attend your baptism.

The following Sunday, after your Baptism, your Baptism Certificate will be in the church mailbox in the atrium over by the office.

Encouragers:

Most of us have one or more people who have had a significant influence in our spiritual journey; parents, family members, friends, pastors, etc. You are invited to ask someone who has had a significant influence in your spiritual journey to join you for your baptism.

Can my family be baptized together?

Yes! If each family member understands fully the meaning of baptism, and each one has personally placed his/her trust in Christ for salvation, we encourage families to be baptized at the same time. It is a wonderful expression of commitment.

However, it is important to remember that baptism is a personal statement of faith, not a family tradition. It is usually not wise to delay your baptism while waiting on other family members to accept Christ, particularly children. This puts an undue pressure on them, and delays your obedience.

Baptism Day

We are looking forward to your baptism weekend and want to provide you with some simple steps in advance. Rest assured that you should not worry about being in the right place at the right time – someone will be guiding you every step of the way.

Before the Service

Please meet in front of the church office area, with family or encourager(s), 20 minutes before the start of the service. We will review the order of service and walk through the baptism logistics. Some prefer to arrive dressed for baptism.

At the appointed time in the service, you and your family/encourager(s) will be invited onto the stage.

Baptism Attire:

We ask that you wear dark knee length shorts or pants and a dark t-shirt. You should plan to bring anything that you will need to change into dry clothes afterwards (a towel, a brush/comb, and any other personal items you think you may need).

If you did not come with attire for baptism, various sizes of dark pants, tee shirts, and there will be plenty of towels available.

Your Affirmation:

Just before the actual immersion, the Pastor will ask you a couple of questions to confirm your relationship with Christ, through salvation, and to affirm your commitment to live and grow in your commitment to Christ.

Your reply is simply “Yes” or “I do”.

YOU’RE BAPTIZED...NOW WHAT?

In giving your life to Jesus you demonstrated that you don’t want to live life on your own terms anymore, and accepted Christ’s gift of eternal life and his invitation and to turn and follow him by faith.

In being baptized you outwardly demonstrated that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life; that you are dedicating yourself to God.

You are now a follower, or disciple, of Jesus Christ. Your new life is characterized by Jesus and living the way that He lived. The life of Jesus is our example to follow; our lives need to be modelled after him.

How should we live? What are the characteristics of our new life?

Romans 6:2-4 tells us:

*“Since we have **died to sin**, how can we **continue to live in it**? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may **live new lives**.” (NLT)*

The Bible also tells us in **Colossians 3:1-2**,

*“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God’s right hand. **Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.** For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden **with Christ in God.** And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.*

NEXT STEPS

Your Spiritual Journey is a process of taking steps toward spiritual maturity. You have taken the **first step**.

STEP 2: CONNECT IN COMMUNITY

As part of a family, you will get the most out of your journey at GPAC if you do it with others. LIFE Groups at GPAC are groups of 8-12 people who “do life together”.
Join a LIFE Group

Become a member of GPAC. “Discover Your Church” is an introductory course to GPAC that will help you take the step to commit to the purpose, vision and key values of your church family.

STEP 3: GROW YOUR HEART

Becoming a “self-feeding” Christ follower is a natural part of spiritual growth. Learning personal spiritual disciplines will help you to keep growing.

STEP 4: SERVE OTHERS

We are all uniquely designed to contribute to accomplish Christ’s purposes. Discover and use your gifts to serve Christ and others at GPAC.

STEP 5: REACH YOUR WORLD

Our goal is to reach people next door or around the world with the life giving message of Jesus. Make this your life mission.