



Preparing Hearts for Home

Immanuel Baptist Church
5050 Bucks Schoolhouse Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21237
Jeffrey C. Shultz, Pastor

We are glad that you have decided to engage in JUMP START!

JUMP START is a personal self-guided 21 designed to help you understand how God works in our lives through salvation, our faith story, prayer and Bible study. Here is what you will cover in JUMP START:

Pastor Jeff's story and yours.

How to Get a Grasp of the Bible

How to talk with God

Why is Baptism important

Why community is important

How to live a life of worship

DAY 1 – WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

Congratulations are in order, because the decision you just made to become a follower of Jesus Christ is the most important decision of your life. With that one decision you...

- Became a new person - ¹⁷ *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!* - **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT2)**
- Joined a new forever family - ¹⁴ *For this reason I kneel before the Father* ¹⁵ *from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.* **Ephesians 3:14-15 (HCSB)**

There are probably so many questions running through your mind, including...

- “What do I do now?”
- “What does it mean to be a Jesus follower?”

No matter how long it took for you to make the decision to follow Jesus, it did not signal the end of a journey, instead it began a brand-new journey. You instantly became a child of God and secured a place in heaven when you accepted Jesus' offer of salvation, but it began a life-long process of getting to know God and serving Him. The apostle Paul said we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) and that God who began a good work in you will complete it (Philippians 1:6). This resource has been designed to get this new life and journey off to a great start. Think of it as your new follower jumpstart.

Please understand that God will not make you grow, or force that on you, He leaves that choice up to you. You can just say, “Thanks for saving me God, I'll talk to you and see you again when I die. If I need anything, I'll let you know.” There is a small problem with that type of thinking, it is not God's purpose for your life. The Bible lets us know about what happens when we accept the forgiveness of sin, salvation and eternal life that Jesus offered through the cross and His resurrection:

⁸ *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.*

⁹ *Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.* ¹⁰ *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* - **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT2)**

Here is a different way to think about it. Salvation is God's gift to us because He loves us, how we live our life after salvation is our gift to Him and a way of saying "Thank you." How we live our lives is a never ending thank you for the gift of salvation He freely gave us for the choosing.

This "New Believer Jump Start" is written to give you tools to start this new life off on the right track. In this guide you will find:

- Pastor Jeff's Faith Story
- How to Get a Grasp of the Bible
- How to Talk With God
- Why Be Baptized
- Why Connect With a Small Group
- How to Live a Life of Worship

You will also find some "Extra Credit" material in the back of the guide. The Bible teaches us that when we ask God to forgive our sin and accept Jesus as our Savior and Leader that we become a brand-new person (2 Corinthian 5:17). That means you just began a brand-new life, My prayer is that this guide will jump start your new forever life in the right direction.

Thanks, and as always it is my honor to be called your Pastor

Pastor Jeff (PJ)

TO DO: Spend some time right now writing down all the people and the situations that helped lead you to Christ. Thank God for them and consider sending a note, text card or call and thank them for being part of the process.

DAY 2 - MY STORY/YOUR STORY

At the insistence of a friend, I attended a week-long church youth camp in the Ozarks of Missouri. I didn't really want to go and be subjected to preaching every night, but I was assured it would be fun. My friend explained there was swimming and sports every day and free time after worship every night. The clincher was his final plea, "and the girls at camp are hot." He was right, they were. The sports during the day and free time every evening more than made up for sitting in church an hour and a half each evening. As for the church service, It really wasn't that bad. On Thursday evening of that week, July 3, 1978, I found myself walking down to the front to ask, Jesus to be my "Savior" and become a Christian.

I grew up in a great home, with a great family. Both of my parents grew up in church and become Christ followers as young people, but after college, getting a new job and moving from their hometowns, finding a church was not high on their list of priorities. The Shultz family was a high expectation family. My Father was a rocket scientist, working with the Defense Department and earned a PhD in Geophysics with a 4.0 grade average. If you were a Shultz, you were expected to achieve. A "C" was not acceptable because a "C" was average, and Shultz's were not average.

On that Thursday summer evening in 1978 I connected to a message about a God who loved me just as I was, even if I was average. While I know my parents loved me, it always felt conditional and that I needed to achieve to stay in that love. I knew it wasn't true, but it was how I felt. I went home from that camp told my parents about my decision and they both decided it was time for them to renew their child-hood faith and we became active in my friend's church.

I went back to school for my senior year as a "Jesus Freak." Around Christmas time, just a little over 5 months after becoming a Christ follower, a man who taught an elementary grade schoolboys Sunday School class asked me to sit with him during his class. I did. After the class, he asked me if I thought I could fill in for him the next week because he was going to be out of town. I said sure, it looked like fun. I substituted for Him. He came back the next week and asked me to help him teach the class again because He didn't have enough time to really prepare because he just got back. After that class he asked if I would like to take over the class, I believe I

said sure it was fun and asked when. He said next week, BAM I became an elementary age grade-school boys Sunday School teacher as a senior in high school and just 5 months after becoming a Christian.

Just a few months later, the next spring, the same thing happened with our “Children’s Church.” So, after returning from the same camp the following year, I was a grade-school boys Sunday School teacher and the Co-Leader of our Children Church ministry.

I was headed to college to pursue a career that would lead to prestige and success. What I wanted to do varied, but ultimately, I felt a tug to be a lawyer. After 1 year of community college and continuing as a Sunday School teacher and Children’s Church leader I decided to follow God leadership and go to Huntington College, now Huntington University, to pursue my dreams and play tennis for the school.

Once there I got connected with a high school ministry called Youth for Christ/Campus Life. My new roommate and I were leading small group High school boy bible study groups and helping with large scale fun events. It was during that time that I sensed that this is what I wanted to do with my life, but not sure what it meant. I talked with one of the Bible/ministry professors at school and his answer was rather straight forward and simple: “Jeff, it sounds like God is calling you to vocational ministry.” I was resistant. I struggled with this “calling” thing the whole year. Returning home that summer I finally realized that God was “calling” me. I came to breakfast one day before leaving for my summer job and made the announcement to my parents. Their response surprised me: “It’s about time.”

When I finally officially gave in to the “call” I told God. Ok I will do it under these conditions I will not ever go to seminary, I will not ever serve on a church staff and I will never, ever become a Pastor. At that moment I could only see myself working with Youth For Christ and on High School campuses. To make a long story short, every one of those things I said I wouldn’t do, I have done, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. Thanks for taking the time to read my story and the honor and privilege to be called...

Your Pastor

TO DO: Yesterday, you wrote down some of the people and instances that led you to the decision to follow Christ. Today begin taking those people and instances and begin to write the your “Faith Story.”

DAY 3 – THE BIBLE

A quick quiz/trivia question: What is the all-time bestselling book in history? If you said anything other than the Bible you were wrong. That’s right, the Bible is the best-selling book of all time. While it is the best-selling book, it may be the least understood and least read of the best-sellers.

As Jesus-followers we believe what the Bible says about itself in 2 Timothy 3:16:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. - (NLT2)

To call the Bible “a book” is a little misleading because...

- it is comprised of 66 books/letters divided into two sections called the Old and New Testament
- These books were written over a span of 1500 years
- The authors number over 40, including Kings, shepherds, farmers, tax collectors, prisoners, fishermen, former religious leaders and even a doctor.
- The authors, for the most part, did not consult each other.
- The authors many times spoke different languages, lived in different countries and even at different times.

Despite all of the obstacles, those 66 books tell a cohesive story of God’s love for his people. That love story includes everything you want in a novel, or major motion picture. It includes a beginning and a “happily ever after.” Along the journey you encounter heroes and villains. There are stories that are predictable and

incredible, falls from grace and rises to power. There is bloodshed and re-birth. Tales of tremendous loyalty and useless betrayal.

In those 66 books you encounter poetry and song, history and sage advice from the wisest of the wise. You get glimpses into intimate letters from Pastors to their beloved people. You will discover mighty warriors and cowardly crooks. In the heart of those pages you get the chance to dive into a four-part rendering of the greatest person to ever walk the face of the earth. This one man's life spanned 33 years, but it changed everything. Those 33 years were so important that it has become the fulcrum of how we tell time.

Those 66 books make up what we call Basic Instructions Before Leaving: The Bible. It is also called God's Word, which is one of the main ways He communicates with us.

Which Translation of the Bible Should I Read?

Until about 50 years ago that was not even a question you thought of, because there was really only one option for those who couldn't read the Bible in its original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic & Greek). That was the King James Version (KJV). The KJV was translated in 1611 to bring scripture to the common people. It was translated from the original languages into the Elizabethan English of the day.

While that language is beautiful and great for wisdom and poetry it not the same language we speak today, therefore it is difficult to understand. It has also been determined that the KJV is written at a post high-school reading level.

Here is a partial list of popular translations of the Bible and their respective reading levels:

- King James Version (KJV): 12th grade
- Revised Standard Version (RSV): 12th grade
- New American Standard Bible (NASB): 11th grade
- New Revised Standard Version (RNSV): 11th grade
- English Standard Version (ESV): 10th grade
- New International Version (NIV): 8th grade
- Holman Christian Standard Version (HCSV): 8th grade
- New King James Version (NKJV): 7th grade
- New Living Translation (NLT): 6th grade
- God's Word (GW): 5th grade
- The Message (MSG): 5th grade
- New Century Version (NCV): 3rd grade

As a result, scholars throughout the past 50-70 years have translated newer and easier to read and understand versions of the Bible. Currently there are over 50 versions of the Bible that are available for either purchase or download. The "You Version" Bible app available on our computers and phones offers over 50 translations to download and read.

We will give you five of the most trusted, easiest to read and understand versions available. They are...

- New International Version
- Holman Christian Standard Version/Christian Standard Bible
- New Living Translation
- New King James Version
- Contemporary English Version

The best advice about the kind and type of Bible you should have comes from a “Pastor’s Urban Legend.” By that we mean we don’t really know if it is factual, but it is certainly true. The story goes like this: A young Pastor was hailing a cab after a session at a church growth convention. The young Pastor saw that the distinguished speaker was also hailing a cab to the same hotel. He offered to share. On the ride the young Pastor asked his distinguished speaker, “What kind of Bible do you think we should have? The wise mentor said I think each of us should have a red Bible. The younger Pastor gave him a confused and disappointed look. By red I don’t mean R.E.D. I mean R.E.A.D.

TO DO: If you can download the You Version App on your smart phone. Also, secure a Bible that you can read, grab some pens and makers and get ready for a great journey of hearing God speak to you through His word that has been breathed onto a page.

DAY 4 – GET A GRASP OF YOUR BIBLE

In this section we want to give you a six-fold strategy on “How to Get a Grasp of the Bible” The concept is not original with Immanuel, but because it is so good, we have adapted it.

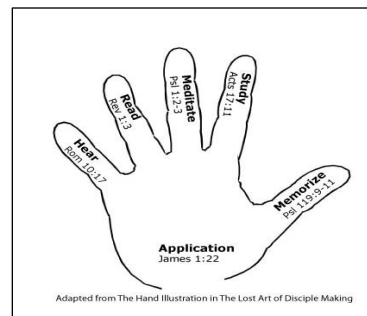
1. Hear - ¹⁷ *So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.* - **Romans 10:17 (NLT2)**

There are multiple ways you can hear God’s word...

- Listening to the messages of your Pastor at church.
- Attend a small group Bible study
- Listen to messages online or on the radio
- Listen to God’s words read through an App called You Version.

Here are some tips to help you as you hear God’s word.

- Take notes during the message.
- If you choose to listen to another Pastor online or on the radio do your homework and make sure their preaching and teaching is of sound doctrine. If you don’t know ask some trusted fellow believers or even your Pastor.



2. Read - ³ *God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.* - **Revelation 1:3 (NLT2)**

Never has there been an easier time in history to read the Bible than now. It’s like the old law firm commercial that stated, “If you have a phone you have a lawyer.” In today’s world you can say, “If you have a screen, you have a Bible.”

Reading scripture is the best and most reliable way to hear from God. A goal of 15 minutes a day is a great way to start. The “You Version” app has many reading plans that can guide you to systematically read through the Bible and get to know God through His word. It has plans that will guide you through the entire Bible in a year or two years as well as other plans, but before you begin to read through the Bible the best thing to kick-start your new journey is to strategically read an overview of the major teaching and themes of Scripture.

TO DO: To get you started on this listening and reading God’s word. Listen to a message from your pastor or a trusted pastor’s message online or the radio. Take notes of what you liked and didn’t understand. Also begin by reading 1 John for 15 minutes. It is a short letter; you may actually be able to read it all in those short 15 minutes.

DAY 4 - STUDY

3. Study - ¹¹ *And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.* - **Acts 17:11 (NLT2)**

The apostle Paul, in a letter to his young protégé' Timothy, challenged him to study hard so he can handle the truths of God's Word accurately. That is great advice, because sometimes what we hear in a message, on the radio, in a class, but even more so on the internet might not be completely accurate. There are even times when we read, we may not fully understand what it means, so we need to become students of scripture.

One of the best ways to study scripture is in a small group with others who are on the same journey. In that small group study most times the lessons are written by trustworthy authors, "who rightly divide the word of truth." You can also ask questions in a group setting.

For individual Bible study there are many reliable and trustworthy Study Bibles that include commentary, notes and background for each book, passage and sometimes even verse.

Bible study and Bible reading are two different disciplines. To study is to ask questions and search deeper. Questions you can ask that lead to Bible study include...

- Is there a promise God has made that I can claim?
- Is there a commandment I must follow?
- Is there a sin that I must confess?
- Is there a truth I didn't know?

TO DO: Read 1 John 1:5-10. As you read these verses write down words or terms you don't as you ask the above questions about what you are reading.

EXTRA CREDIT: There are a couple of really good books that help guide you through how to personally study the Bible. They are

- How to Study the Bible by John MacArthur
- Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods

These two resources provide guidance for how to bridge the gap from when the words were originally written and what they can mean to us today. They help you mine the timeless truths that the Bible contains.

DAY 5 - MEMORIZE

Memorize - ¹¹ *I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.* - **Psalms 119:11 (NLT2)**

There are so many reasons to, as King David said above, "hide God's word in our heart." He listed one, it keeps us from sin. Memorizing God's word is a great tool in our growth as Christ followers. It can help us....

- Repeat God's promises to others
- Share the Good News of Jesus
- Be a weapon in spiritual warfare
- Remind us who we are
- Remind us who He is

Tips for how to memorize scripture:

Write it down

- Read/Say it out loud one word at a time. (Start with the first word, then the first two words, then first three words until you have read/said the entire verse.)
- Write the verse on a note card and place in a location you will see often so you can repeat it out loud until you know it.

- Start with a verse a month, then a verse every two weeks until you get to where you can memorize a verse a week.
- Keep the verses you have memorized on note cards and review them monthly.

Here is a list of 15 verses to hide in your heart:

Genesis 1:1	Exodus 34:6-7
Deuteronomy 6:4-5	Psalms 119:11
Isaiah 53:6	Matthew 28:18-20
John 3:16	John 14:6
Romans 6:23	Romans 8:28
I Corinthians 15:3-4	2 Corinthians 5:21
Galatians 5:16	Ephesians 2:8-10
Philippians 4:6-7	

DAY 6 - MEDITATE

Meditate - But *they delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.* - **Psalms 1:2 (NLT2)**

Many people are confused, or even afraid, of anything to do with meditating. They say, “I can’t do that, I don’t know how.” Meditation is not some mystical eastern practice, or anything to be frightened of. Do you ever worry about anything? Of course, you do. How do you do worry? You do it by a continued focus, or thinking upon, or mulling over all the possible bad outcomes of a certain situation.

Take for instance, an upcoming medical procedure such as a biopsy. To worry about it is to focus upon all the possible results of the biopsy. Is it cancer? If so, I will have to have chemo, then probably followed by radiation, lose my hair. What if it is terminal? How much longer do I have? Before we know it we are actually physically ill because of the stress we have placed upon our body due to worry, and it was all over something we can’t control.

Think of meditation as the opposite of worry. Meditation on God’s word is to simply mull over, think over all the promises of a certain scripture. While we worry over things that are not yet reality, meditation is to focus upon things that are true and real. They are the promises based upon the character and nature of our Heavenly Father.

Meditation is closely related to how a cow eats. It is called rumination, the thoroughly chewing of food, swallowing it and bringing it back up again to chew on it some more. A cow eats like this so it can gain every last ounce of nutrition in its’ food. To meditate on scripture is to mine its content to gain every bit of wisdom, truth and hope we can. You can practice meditating on scripture while doing almost anything: taking a shower, going for a walk, running, or even household chores.

A great example of how to meditate on scripture is take a verse you have memorized and repeat it while emphasizing a different word or phrase each time. For example, Philippians 4:13: “For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.” (NLT) Repeat it while emphasizing the bold word.

*For **I** can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

*For I **can** do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*

*For I can do **everything** through Christ, who gives me strength.*

*For I can do everything **through** Christ, who gives me strength.*

*For I can do everything through **Christ**, who gives me strength.*
*For I can do everything through Christ, who **gives** me strength.*
*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives **me** strength.*
*For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me **strength**.*

TO DO: As you take a shower today, practice meditating on a verse that is fresh on your mind. Think it through, mine it for all of its' promises, truth and instruction. When finished thank God for His word and that He still speaks through it today.

DAY 7 – APPLICATION

Application - ²² *But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.* - **James 1:22 (NLT2)**

Hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on scripture and not applying it just like a person who reads and knows everything they can about nutrition and exercise and doesn't do anything with all the information. All that knowledge is no good and useless unless it is put into motion.

Here are some questions you can ask about the scripture you are currently engaged with to help you apply it to your daily life. Based upon the truth of the scripture I am reading is there...

- A promise I can claim in my current situation?
- An example I should follow?
- A command I need to obey?
- A sin to confess?
- An action I should take?
- An attitude I need to change or adopt?

TO DO: What action can you take from what you learned through your study this week.

DAY 8-14 – TALKING TO GOD-PRAYER

Prayer is this amazing, frightening, rewarding, difficult, simple and complex spiritual discipline that is vital to a growing relationship with God. It is nothing more and nothing less than an on-going conversation with God.

It is amazing because it has changed the course of history. Prayer, in the Bible and in subsequent history, has healed the sick, protected the innocent, delivered the captive and maybe the most important thing is changed the eternal destination and trajectory of lost lives for anyone who asks Jesus for forgiveness and accepts His gift of salvation.

It is frightening, because all you have to do as ask a group if anyone is willing to pray and watch the heads that bow and eyes that close in hope that they won't make eye contact with the leader asking for a volunteer. We fear what an audible, public prayer would sound like to others.

Prayer is also this practice we know we should do, could be effective and life-changing, but yet we don't practice like we should.

Examples of Prayers

- Jesus gave us a model prayer as an example to follow – Matthew 6:9-13
- The Psalms are a great collection of prayer lifted to God
- Paul recorded some of His prayers for his churches – Philippians 1:3-11, Ephesians 1:15-23

Advice for how and what to pray

Pray about everything - ⁶ *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.* ⁷ *Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* - **Philippians 4:6-7 (NLT2)**

Pray all the time - ¹⁶ *Always be joyful.* ¹⁷ *Never stop praying.* ¹⁸ *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* - **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NLT2)**

Types of Prayer

- Thankfulness – Thanksgiving is different from praise. It is simply saying “Thank You” to God for what He has done. We can thank God for saving us, sending Jesus, giving us strength, leading us to Immanuel, friends, family, His provision, His faithfulness. The number of things we can thank God for, on both a small and large scale is limitless.
- Adoration/Praise – While thankfulness is saying “thank you” for WHAT He has done, adoration is praising Him for WHO He is. Examples include: “Father I praise you, because you are perfect, loving, gentle, patient, kind, forgiving. I praise you because you are all powerful, all knowing, all present. When we praise God, it usually revolves around his attributes and characteristics.
- Confession – Confession begins with owning up to our sin. It is more than regretting we got caught. The word confession comes from a Greek word that carries the idea of having the same thought about our sin that God does. We regret that our sin separates us from God and we turn away from it and begin to walk in God's direction. When we confess we let God know we feel and think the same way He does when it comes to our sin and rebellion against Him and His leadership in our life.
- Intercession – To intercede is plead to God on behalf of someone else. We can intercede for others when they are sick, confused, hurting, or in need of strength, wisdom and understanding. The most important way we can intercede for someone else is for salvation. We can plead with God to open their eyes to their need for salvation and ask God to draw them to Himself.

TIPS

Here is a tip if you are having difficulty on what and how to pray. Place an empty chair in front of you and begin talking to God as if He were sitting in the chair.

A possible way to structure your prayer: The acronym of ACTS

- A – Adoration: Begin with Praise to God for who He is. This is praising Him for His nature and who He IS, not what He DOES
- C – Confession: When we praise God for who He is, we begin to get a better glimpse for who we are and see ourselves in light of who He is. That means confession and repentance follow. Confess our sins to him. Sins of commission (the sins we commit with actions) and Sins of omission (the things we don't do).
- T – Thanks: At this point there is so much to which we can say “Thanks” to God. We can thank Him for forgiven sin, His patience with us, the people in our lives, the physical blessing and even the difficult times the create growth in our relationship
- S – Supplication: This is basically bringing our requests to God. We can pray for ourselves, for others, for needs. The Bible instructs us to bring everything to God, if it burdens us bring it. If it scares us bring

it. If it excites us bring it. If we worry about it bring it. Not just the big stuff, everything. He is concerned about everything in our life.

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Praying Scripture is an effective way to pray. To do that you simply choose a scripture and begin to say it back to God in your context.. Below is an example from the first line of Psalm 23.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I have all I need.”.

“Heavenly Father this morning I acknowledge you as Lord. You are the one who rules and reigns over everything. You look out for and care for the people in your kingdom and under your rule. Not only are you Lord of all of creation, I want you to be my Lord. I want you to reign and rule over every aspect of my life.

Thank you for being my shepherd. Thank you for caring for me, always watching out for me to make sure I’m healthy and protected from predators. Thanks for loving me so much that you gave me a name. A term of affection that no-one else has. It is designed and selected just for me.

Because you are such a good Lord and Shepherd everything, I could ever need I have. You love me so much so that you provide everything. It was that way when you made the world, and it is still that way. Help me Good Shepherd to know the difference between what I want and what I need. Sometime my wants can get me into trouble. Help me be content with what I need because all I need is you.”

Have a great week of discovering how powerful prayer can be in our lives and the lives of everyone around us.

One last note...

You will get distracted. While you are praying random and even sinful thoughts will run through your mind. That is common and the reason is because we have an adversary who doesn’t want us talking to God. One of his strategies is to distract us while we are praying.

A helpful hint with this is to write your prayers, like you write a letter. It is called a prayer journal. In that journal you can record your prayers, your requests, the things you are worried about, or frighten you. After you have practiced doing this, it is a great thing to go back and read that journal and witness what God has done.

DAY 15 - GET CONNECTED

In almost every part of the world that God created community is vital for health, survival and even prosperity. Trees that are growing in close proximity to others “share” roots that make them stronger as a community. Where one lone tree might be uprooted by strong winds, trees that are in community with each gain strength from the surrounding trees and can withstand winds that would have easily toppled them if alone.

Packs, herds, flocks and schools of animals have been able to fend off predators because they were in community. It is the lone, segregated and isolated one that falls prey to the predator.

The best community for a new follower of Jesus to get connected to is a local church and even more specifically a small group that studies, lives and has fun together.

At Immanuel we offer both large and small group times of worship, study and growth. By connecting on these levels, you get the opportunity to...

- Worship through singing praises to God with other believers
- Hear a biblically based message with practical steps you can implement that day
- Meet and connect with new friends and your new faith family
- Use your talents to serve and help others get to know and experience the new life you now have.

TO DO: Read Hebrews 10:23-25: ²³ *Let us hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.* ²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works,* ²⁵ *not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.*

What does this passage say about the importance of gathering together?

This passage says we should consider one another as we gather. Why do you think it is important to gather, not just for our faith, but for the sake of others?

DAY 16 - CONNECTION IS NOT OPTIONAL

Getting involved in not optional, God instructs (hear commands) us to gather together as a spiritual family.

“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another...” – Hebrews 10:24-25

When we don’t consistently gather with other believers for worship, growth and service we get discouraged and pulled down with the daily struggles of life. These times of worship, growth and service with other followers become times of refreshment, renewal and regeneration. Don’t neglect them.

At Immanuel we expect “Immanuelites” to be

- Consistent in worship attendance.
- Plugged into a small group that meets regularly
- Giving back in service on a ministry team.

A list of ministry teams, the team leaders and our small groups are available. Please email the church office at admin@immanuelbaptistchurch.org and ask for a list. It will be emailed to you.

At Immanuel we have three on-going small groups that meet on Sunday mornings. They are...

Bible book Study – This group studies the Bible a book at a time alternating between the different types of literature in scripture. Old Testament, New Testament, Wisdom, History/Theology, Gospel and Epistle (Letter)

Wired Word – This group focuses upon what the bible has to say about what is taking place in the world right now. It examines trends, happenings and world events through the lens of a biblical world-view.

Ladies Group – Our Sunday morning Ladies group is a topic based group, usually chosen around a solid biblical teaching author or book.

Short-term groups – On Wednesday evening following our prayer time the Pastor leads short term group based upon spiritual growth/discipleship. Some of the topics include how to defend our faith, how Christianity is unique among the world religions, how to share your faith and others.

TO DO: Contact the church office for a current list of groups, group leaders, what they are currently studying and when they are meeting and decide to check one out. They will glad to welcome you as part of the family.

DAY 17 - BAPTISM

Baptism confuses a lot of people. Initially, it’s not easy to understand the significance of being totally immersed in water after becoming a Christian. Much of the confusion centers on questions like, “I was sprinkled as a

child, so I don't have to be baptized, right?" or "If I don't get baptized does that mean I'm not saved?" When you make the decision to commit your life to Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches that one of your very next steps of obedience is to be baptized by immersion, following Jesus's example.

Baptism is an act of obedience and a public declaration of faith. When Jesus was ready to begin His earthly ministry, He showed His devotion to the Father by being baptized:

Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." - Matthew 3:13–17

Later, the apostles taught that all who accept the message of Jesus Christ and invite Him into their lives should follow His example of baptism:

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...." Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. - Acts 2:38, 41

Baptism is symbolic of two essential truths of your faith:

1. What Jesus did for you: ***"He died for your sins, was buried and came back to life"*** (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).
2. What has happened to you: ***"You died to your old life, are buried in baptism and raised to live a new life in Jesus Christ"*** (Romans 6:3–4).

Never get tricked into thinking that baptism is what saves you. The work of your salvation was done the moment that you believed in your heart that Jesus is Lord and professed that belief with your mouth by asking Him to come into your life and forgive you of your sins. Baptism is a Next Step of obedience—the outward symbol of the work that God has done in you. You have been raised to walk in newness of life! That's definitely something to celebrate!

TO DO: If you have not been baptized and would like to take that next step please click [here](#). If you have more questions please let the office know and they we can help you with any questions you might have.

DAY 18 – HOW DO I PREPARE FOR BAPTISM

Now that you have decided to get baptized there are some things you can do to make it as memorable an experience as possible.

- Tell your friends and family that you are being baptized.
- Select a date that works best for as many people as possible.
- Invite all of them to the baptism.
- Write the events (your faith story) that led to your decision to accept Christ as Savior. There are more details on the step below.
- Decide to record a video of your story, read your story, or have a friend or family member read your story just before you are baptized. If you plan to record a video email the church office and let them know that is your plan.

What should I bring to the baptism?

- Swimsuit and dark T-Shirt to wear while being baptized.

- Towel to dry off.
- Plastic bag for your wet clothes

What will happen during the baptism?

- The Pastor will meet with you 30 minutes before the service to walk through what will happen.
- Just before the service begins go into the dressing and change into swimsuit and T-shirt.
- When dressed go through the door and sit at the top of the stairs over the baptism pool.
- The Pastor will make some introductory comments and then call you into the pool.
- He will ask you: “(Your name) have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior” You will answer, “yes I have” He will then lower you into the water as he says, “It is my privilege to baptize you my sister/brother in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You are buried with Jesus in baptism and raised to walk a new life in Him.” He will then pray for you.

TO DO: Make all the arrangements needed for your baptism day. Tomorrow you will work on the finishing touches of the faith story you began writing in Week 1.

DAY 19 – HOW TO WRITE YOUR FAITH STORY

Your personal account of how you came to the point of asking Jesus to become your Savior is the most effective way of telling other people about the good news of Jesus Christ. In John 9 we read a story of Jesus healing a blind man in an unusual way. Jesus rubbed mud on his eyes and then instructed him to go and wash the mud off with the waters from a certain pool. The man is obedient and when he opens his eyes after washing off the mud he can, for the first time in his life, miraculously see. To say the least this caused an uproar and even controversy. He was challenged by many people to answer how this Jesus person healed him. After the discussion and debate, he simply said, “look the only thing I can tell you is I was blind and now I can see.” Read the story in John 9:1-25.

Your faith story breaks down into three parts:

1. My life before Christ
2. How, when and why I asked Jesus to be my Savior
3. What is happening now as a result of this new life.

Once you write down the rough draft, let a good friend read it and get their thoughts on it. Make the edits and then begin reading it over and over until you can tell it. We would suggest you ask that friend if they will listen to you tell your story.

After that ask God to show you a person to whom you can tell your story. Let the journey begin.

As you grow and work on your story it is best to have three versions: the short, medium and uncut.

- The short version is just 2-4 minute that includes the highlights. It is almost like a sound bite.
- The medium version is a 6-10 minute story that includes some specific stories and people who were involved.
- The uncut is a 15-20 minute version that includes almost everything. This version is for when you are invited to speak or lead a class.

The version you will share at your baptism is a hybrid between the short and medium. You will want to include the names of people you want to thank for sharing and walking with you through the making of your decision to follow Jesus.

TO DO: Write your short version and baptismal version stories. Decide if you want to video it or have a person read it. Also begin showing it and telling it to trusted people to help you make it as effective as it can be.

DAY 20 – GIFTS, TALENTS AND ABILITIES

In 1 Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul tells us about a thing called “spiritual gifts.” He says the Holy Spirit gives each believer certain gifts they are to use to help others and help build the kingdom. “Gifts” is the biblical word that describes talent and abilities. This isn’t the only place that gifts are mentioned. We can also find others listed in Romans 12, Ephesians 4 and other various places in the New Testament. Another way to say it is the things that you are naturally good at doing.

The tendency is to think I don’t have any spiritual gifts because we think of spiritual gifts as “too spiritual.” These gifts are more than being able to preach, teach, sing or play an instrument.

As an example the New Testament lists some of the following as “spiritual gifts:”

- Helping,
- Administering
- Leading
- Service
- Having mercy on others
- Hospitality

TO DO: To understand better what your spiritual gifts may be answer the questions below.

- What do you love to do with your free time?
- Do you like working with numbers?
- Are you artistic?
- At what do people say I’m good?
- Would you rather work behind the scenes?
- Are you an introvert or extrovert?
- If someone needs something do you volunteer to help?
- Do you like helping others understand how something works?

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

To determine even further your spiritual gifts consider reading one of the following books and take the survey:

- Three Colors of Ministry by Kristin Schwarz
- Discover Your Spiritual Gifts C. Peter Wagner

DAY 21 – SPIRITUAL GIFTS PART 2

Service and using your gifts to help others is one of the most effective ways to grow in your relationship with and devotion to Christ. At Immanuel almost everything we do is done by volunteers who serve on various ministry teams. Here is just a partial list of ministry roles that are filled and help Immanuel complete their vision of “Preparing Hearts For Home.” Read through the list, see what intrigues you, or you sense God is leading you toward doing and then click on the link to the ministry team/leaders to take your next step of helping others discover their God given purpose.

- Front Line Greeter – Welcome Team
- Usher – Welcome Team/Ushers
- Routine Maintenance – Building & Grounds
- Lawn Care – Building & Grounds
- Planning Events – Special Events
- Setting Up/Decorating for events – Special Events
- Home Repair – Mission Team

- Mentoring Children – TreeHouse Children’s Ministry Small Group Leader
- Mentoring Students – Student Ministry
- Acting – Treehouse Family Experience
- Singing/Playing Instrument – Worship Leadership Team and TreeHouse Family Experience
- Sound/Audio – AV Ministry Team
- Graphics/Film Editing – Digital/Media Ministry Team
- Behind the scenes set up/tear down - Building & Grounds
- Meeting New People – Mission (Outreach) Team
- Meeting with and developing relationships with Senior Adults – Mission Team
- Helping Others in Need – Mission Team
- Organizing, counting overseeing financial area of the church – Finance Ministry Team
- Encouraging and helping church staff be as effective as possible – Personnel Ministry Team
- Small Group Leader – SS/Small Groups Ministry
- Caring for and mentoring babies and pre-school age children – Pre-School Ministry Team

NOTE: You don’t even have to be a member to serve on certain ministry teams, but there are certain requirements and qualifications to serve on other teams.

TO DO: To see a list of the Immanuel ministry teams and leaders click [here](#).

Contact the team leader and see how you can connect with and help the team complete their purpose for the Kingdom.