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Following the Way

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

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. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:37 – 40 (NIV)



Find Forgiveness, Purpose, & Family

We are so glad you're here! It is our desire that "Highlands is Home" becomes more than just a catchy phrase we use, that Highlands truly becomes Home for you and your family.

When we talk about home, our minds go back to our childhood - the memories of growing up, visiting Grandma and Grandpa, hanging out with our brothers and sisters, cousins, watermelon on the front porch. Maybe when you think of home, you don't have happy thoughts. We understand that the idea of home may not be appealing to you. We want to help you find a happy home, one filled with love and acceptance. We're all looking for home, a place to belong - a place where the broken can find healing, grace is given to those with messy lives, the lonely are met with hugs, hope to rebuild is shared with families torn apart and compassion is extended to the dark corners of the world where there is injustice. At Highlands, we are united, devoted, and together we look forward to seeing God move in our midst, believing the best is yet to come.

MISSION & VISION

Our mission as a church is **“To Help People Experience Life With Jesus”**. We seek to share the love of Jesus with all we encounter, allowing our local church to be the hope of the world.

Jesus called His disciples to a life of transformation (both inside and out) that turned the world upside down. He came with an invitation to transform their life, to make changes for the better, and that offer is still available to us today. Our vision at Highlands is **“To see the transformation of people and places through Jesus”**. Our vision is as big as what God can do through transforming you.

Experiencing life with Jesus starts with acknowledging who He is and what He did on the cross for every one of us. That is the first step toward transforming your life and walking with Him.

Oftentimes, we ask ourselves, “Is this all there is?” “When do I get to the ‘good life’?” Jesus said in John 10:10, *“I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.”* And that starts today. In looking at the things that have shaped and formed you, you will see that God has always intended for you to have a life of purpose.

So how do I find my purpose? How do I discover the path of life? Psalm 16:11 reveals the Source, *“You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* By looking to God and the truth of His Word, we can find the path to true life, a life of purpose.

FINDING MY PURPOSE

MY PURPOSE

1.) Everything starts with God.

The Lord has made everything for His own purposes... **Proverbs 16:4a (NLT)**

For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. **Colossians 1:16 (ESV)**

Everything, including you and me, was created by and for the Lord.

2.) My purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen. **Romans 11:36 (ESV)**

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' **Acts 17:24 - 28 (NKJV)**

It is in God alone that we live, move, and have our being.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way:

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. **Ecclesiastes 12:13 (ESV)**

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? **Micah 6:8 (NKJV)**

THE PROBLEM

We are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God.

*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.***
Romans 3:20 - 23 (ESV)

The word “sin” means to “miss the mark”. We sin when we miss the mark by not living up to God’s glorious standards. Though some of us may consider ourselves “good people” or “better than our neighbors”, the truth is that we all have missed the mark, both in outward actions and inward attitudes.

The Bible teaches that all of us are born with a sin nature.

...one trespass led to condemnation for all men... **Romans 5:18a (ESV)**

THE PENALTY

The penalty for our sin is death and eternal separation from God in a place called Hell.

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned. **Romans 5:12 (ESV)**

For the wages of sin is death... **Romans 6:23a (ESV)**

THE PROVISION

God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die in our place. Through His sacrificial death on the cross, the death penalty for our sins was paid.

But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Romans 5:8 (ESV)**

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. **1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)**

THE PARDON

God offers a free pardon from sin and eternal life to everyone who places their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Romans 10:9 - 10 (ESV)

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:13 (ESV)

JESUS IS OUR PATH TO PURPOSE. HE IS THE WAY!

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” **John 14:6 (ESV)**

In order to find our purpose and be reconciled to our Heavenly Father, we have to place our faith in Jesus Christ and confess Him as our Lord and Savior. There is no other way to receive salvation.

No matter how many good works you may do, how holy and righteous you try to be, or how religious you are, it will never be enough to bridge the gap that sin has created between you and God. Jesus’ death on the cross is the only sufficient payment for our sin and the only bridge to a relationship with our heavenly Father.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **Ephesians 2:8 - 9 (ESV)**

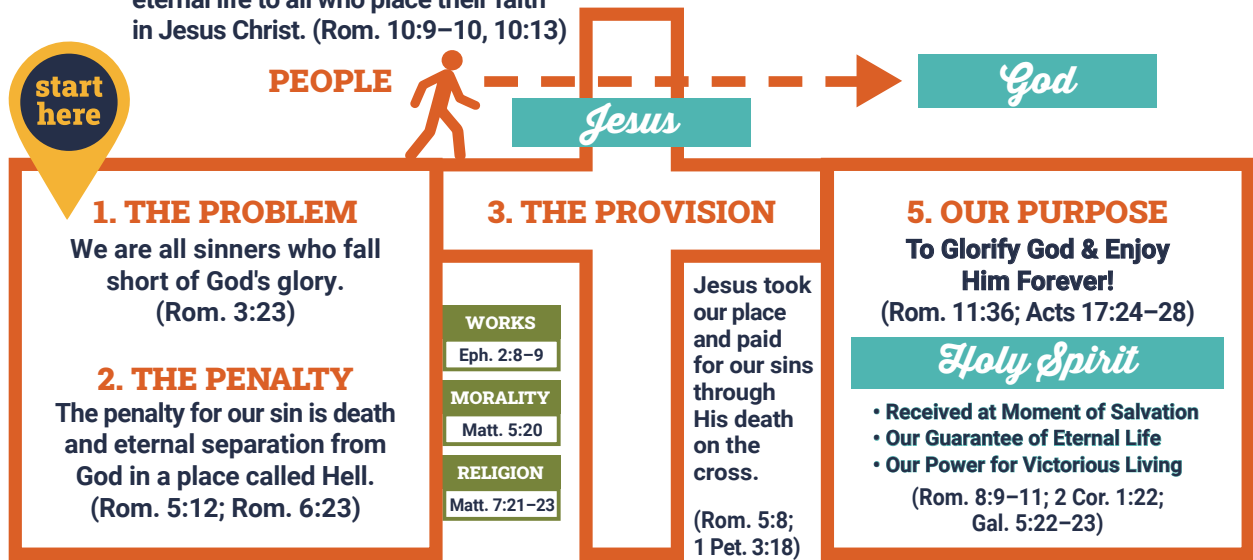
For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. **Matthew 5:20 (NKJV)**

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; leave Me, you who practice lawlessness.’” **Matthew 7:21 - 23 (NASB)**

Jesus is the way, and He has clearly laid out the path to salvation in His Word. It is up to each of us to accept this free gift of salvation by grace through faith in His death, burial and resurrection. Then and only then will we be able to live out our created purpose of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

4. THE PARDON

God offers a free pardon from sin and eternal life to all who place their faith in Jesus Christ. (Rom. 10:9–10, 10:13)



PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Choosing to follow Jesus involves repentance (a change in thinking that leads to a change of direction). Some people have been in church their entire life and lived out many spiritual habits, but they do not have a clear memory of the moment they turned and followed Jesus. We have to ask ourselves if we are living in a religion or a relationship. Do you recall your moment?

It comes down to one simple question: Have I placed my faith in Jesus Christ? This is a one-time decision, your choice, to place your trust in Jesus, and by faith you will be saved. Once you make this life-changing decision, your eternity is secure. We all continue to struggle with sin, but we cannot lose our salvation. We are saved by grace and kept by grace.

So, before we go any further, if you don't remember your moment, or want to make sure you've had a moment, let's pray together now. Pray something like this. You don't have to pray this word for word, but pray honestly from your heart to the Lord.

Lord, I **Admit** that I am a sinner. I have fallen short of Your glorious standards. I **Believe** that You sent Your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross, in my place, to pay the price for my sins. I **Believe** Jesus rose from the grave and defeated sin and death. I **Confess** Jesus as my Lord and Savior, and I ask You to forgive me of my sins. I accept the free gift of salvation and eternal life You are offering me. Thank You for saving me!

If you just prayed this prayer from your heart, congratulations! You are now a child of the King, and your sins have been forgiven! This is your moment. Nothing and no one can ever take away your salvation. Please let us know about your decision here:

Scan QR code or visit HF.Church/Salvation to let us know!



If you have further questions or would like to talk with someone about what it means to be saved, talk to your campus pastor at this week's meet-up.

PICTURE OF SALVATION

After we make the decision to accept Jesus as our Savior, His first command to us as new followers is to let our family and friends know of our decision by being baptized. Baptism is a picture of Jesus buried in the tomb and raised to new life. We are buried to our old self, we repented, and are raised to follow Him. Baptism is an outward expression of what's taken place on the inside.

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." **John 14:15 (ESV)**

And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. **Acts 16:33 (ESV)**

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." **Matthew 28:19 (ESV)**

*So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added **that day** about three thousand souls.* **Acts 2:41 (ESV)**

Jesus was baptized by immersion. Immersion means to go completely under the water. Baptism by immersion is a picture of what Jesus did (death, burial, and resurrection) and what happens when we first become a believer (we are dead in sin, saved, and raised to new life). Following Jesus' baptism, every baptism recorded in the Bible was by immersion. He set the example for us, and we follow Him.

*And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him. **Matthew 3:16 (ESV)***

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

If you have never been biblically baptized (by immersion AFTER salvation), then we can talk about your baptism at our next meet-up. We can do it right away or set up a time in the near future for you to show the world a picture of what Jesus has done in your heart and life!

MY NEW FAMILY

1.) The moment I receive salvation, I am born again.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. **1 Peter 1:3 (ESV)***

To be “born again” may sound like a strange concept at first, but it means that we have been “born from above”, spiritually transformed. When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we receive new life and a new heart. As Jesus teaches in John 3, when we are “born again”, we receive eternal life.

Being “born again” also means that we become children of God when we trust in Jesus for salvation.

*But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become **children of God**, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **John 1:12 - 13 (ESV)***

2.) The moment I receive salvation, I am adopted into God's family.

*God decided in advance to **adopt** us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure. **Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)***

The moment you're born again, you automatically become a part of God's family, the universal family of all His believers in the whole world. However, you don't become a part of a specific, local church, like Highlands or any other church, until you choose to join.

Though there are many individual "local families" of Christians in the world, we are all on the same team and united as one body for the glory of God.

*Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. **Ephesians 4:3 - 6 (NLT)***

WHY SHOULD I BE A MEMBER OF A LOCAL CHURCH?

You may be asking yourself, "Why do I need to be a member of a local church, if I became a member of the global church when I got saved?" The Bible teaches that we need one another to live out our purpose of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. We can't fully live out our purpose apart from the body of Christ.

1.) The church is a body.

The Bible teaches that the church is the body of Christ. We are a body, not a business. We are an organism, not an organization.

*Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. **1 Corinthians 12:27 (NKJV)***

2.) Jesus is the Head of the body.

He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Colossians 1:18 (NASB)

3.) The church is one body, made up of many members who belong to each other.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **Romans 12:4 - 5 (NKJV)**

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. **1 Corinthians 12:12 - 14 (NKJV)**

4.) The Bible commands us to meet together regularly in order to stir one another to achieve our purpose.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. **Hebrews 10:24 - 25 (ESV)**

5.) The purpose of the church is to glorify God.

To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. **Ephesians 3:21 (ESV)**

Church membership is the commitment of a believer to be identified and involved with a local body of Christians who have placed themselves under the authority of Jesus Christ. When we join a local body, we obey God's commands in Scripture and are equipped to follow the path of purpose He has set forth for our lives.

GETTING TO KNOW HIGHLANDS



HISTORY

- 1994** Pastor Jimmie Davidson and family moved to Abingdon to plant Highlands Fellowship
- 1995** Our first service was held on Easter Sunday, meeting in Coomes Recreation Center
- 2000** Built our first building and held our first gathering on Easter Sunday of that year
- 2003** Purchased a home near the Abingdon campus to house international pastors and leaders, training them in the Purpose Driven model
- 2006** Opened our first satellite campus in Bristol, VA followed by locations in Marion and Bluefield, VA
- 2012** Called Pastor Allen Jessee to lead the church upon our founding pastor being called to join a church in California
- 2012** Began streaming our Sunday morning gatherings online
- 2018** Partnered with Bluefield College to launch HFCollege, an accredited program that allows students to gain practical experience in ministry
- 2020** Began broadcasting our Sunday morning gatherings on local television
- 2024** Called Pastor Tim Brown to lead the church as Pastor Allen Jessee followed God's call to lead our regional and global networks

STRUCTURE

We seek Jesus' wisdom and guidance daily; He is our ultimate leader. Our leadership consists of our Lead Pastor, Directional Leadership Team, and Board of Directors. The Directional Leadership Team oversees the church staff who is tasked with equipping volunteers for ministry. Together, we carry out the mission and vision of the church.

Leadership and Staff provide support for Highlands Fellowship multi-site campuses, HFCollege, Global Strategic Partners and our Regional Pastor Network.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

The biblical principles that we follow are found in the Great Commandment and Great Commission, and we follow a set of Core Beliefs that govern all we do in our church.

The Great Commandment: *Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart... soul and... mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.* **Matthew 22:37 – 40 (NIV)**

The Great Commission: *"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."* **Matthew 28:19 – 20a (NIV)**

As we continue to meet the next three weeks, we will point back to the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Our Heart, Health and Hope sections are found in these two guiding principles.

CORE BELIEFS

Our Core Beliefs give us diversity in our church family. Because your family is different from my family - we do things differently, we see the world differently, we have our own ways of doing things - our essential and non-essential beliefs allow us to live in harmony.

In essential beliefs, we have unity. (Ephesians 4:4 – 6)

In non-essential beliefs, we have liberty. (Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22)

In all our beliefs, we show love. (1 Corinthians 13:2)

ESSENTIALS WE BELIEVE

God

There is only one living and true God. He is Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all things. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

(Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Matthew 3:16 - 17)

God, The Father

The Father is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and all-wise. God is sovereign over all creation and Father to those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. In Him, we have our being. He is loving, gracious, merciful and just. (Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; 2:7; 3:22; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2)

God, The Son

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Sent by the Father, He joined us here on earth, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, becoming fully man while remaining fully God. He lived a perfect, sinless life while on earth. He died on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, was buried and rose victorious over sin and death on the third day. He is now seated at the right hand of God, will return to earth to rescue His church, and reign over His new creation. (Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 9:6; Hebrews 4:14, 15; John 1:1 - 5; 14:10 - 30; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4; Romans 1:3, 4; Acts 1:9 - 11; 1 Timothy 6:14, 15; Titus 2:13; Rev. 21:1 - 5)

God, The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He brings awareness of our sin and our need for Jesus. The Holy Spirit lives in each person at the moment of salvation. He provides the believer power for living, understanding of spiritual truths, guidance to do what is right in our daily walk, and a spiritual gift to serve the church. (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 16:7 - 13; 14:16, 17; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 3:16; Ephesians 1:13; Galatians 5:25; Ephesians 5:18)

The Bible

The Bible is God's Word to us. It is the supreme source of truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, written without error by man in its original form. It is the final authority in all matters of faith, practice and truth. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 1:13; Psalm 119:105, 160; Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5)

Humanity

People are created in the image of God, male and female, to be like God and with God. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, from the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 until now, all are born with a sinful nature that separates us from God. We are incapable of repairing this relationship apart from the salvation of Jesus. (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 8:3 - 6; Isaiah 53:6a; Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:1, 2)

Salvation

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it by faith alone. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by turning to Jesus Christ and trusting in the sacrifice He made on the cross can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into their life by faith. (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8, 9; John 14:6; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1)

Eternal Security

Because salvation is born of grace, it is kept by grace. While all believers were given the gift of salvation, we are called to persevere in the faith. Ultimately, salvation is sealed by the Holy Spirit and protected by the power of God's hand. When a person receives Jesus by faith and commits to follow Him, his/her salvation is eternally secure. (John 10:9, 29; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25; 10:10, 14; 1 Peter 1:3 - 5)

Eternity

We believe that those who have received the free gift of salvation will experience eternal life with God. God will make all things new. Those who have received Jesus will ultimately be made new, and there will be a new heaven, new earth, and God will live with His people forever. Those who have not received Jesus will be separated from God in Hell. (John 3:6; John 14:17; Romans 6:23; Romans 8:17 - 18; Revelation 20:13 - 15; 1 Corinthians 2:7 - 9)

The Church

The church is global, made up of believers of all nations. Jesus calls us to gather to pray, study the Bible, build community, and worship. The church is called to be the hands and feet of Jesus, providing hope to a broken world. (Revelation 5:9, Acts 1:8, Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18 - 20; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:15 - 16; Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:26)



ORDINANCES OF BAPTISM & COMMUNION

We believe Baptism is the immersion of a person in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit after salvation. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried and risen Savior. It is the outward expression of an internal decision. (Matthew 3:13 - 16; Acts 2:41; 8:36 - 38)

The Lord's Supper (Communion) is to remind the believer of the sacrifice Christ made for us through His death on the cross. The bread symbolizes His broken body, and the cup reminds us of His shed blood. (Matthew 26:26 - 28; 1 Corinthians 11:23 - 26)

STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE & SEXUAL EXPRESSION

We believe in the biblical view of marriage and sexual expression; namely, that marriage is a lifelong one-flesh covenant union between two sexually different persons (male and female), from different families, and that all sexual relationships and expressions outside of marriage are sin.

We believe that living in the way of Jesus means embracing His vision of faithfulness in sexuality. This practically looks like abstaining from all sexual relationships outside of the biblical vision of Christian marriage expressed in lifelong covenant union between a man and woman, avoiding pornography, inappropriate relationships that compromise our witness, and pursuing life-giving holiness by the grace of God. Practicing this vision of faithfulness in sexual expression should come from a deep inner transformation of the heart (Matthew 5:27 - 28).

We strive to express this belief in accordance with the way of Jesus, which is full of grace and truth. We welcome all people, regardless of their belief and practice, to attend Highlands and to hear the good news of Jesus.

Highlands Fellowship Membership Covenant

1. I have received Jesus as my Lord and Savior, been baptized by immersion, and am committed to living the biblical, Christian lifestyle as described in the statements of belief.
2. I align with the church's mission, vision, strategy, and statements of belief.
3. I commit to protect and promote the unity of our church by demonstrating love through my words and actions.
4. I commit to actively participating in the life of the church, including things such as gatherings, serving, spiritual formation courses, and small groups.
5. I commit to give faithfully, regularly, and generously of my financial resources to help fulfill the mission and vision of the church.
6. I commit to helping others experience belonging with the church, and to sharing the hope and love of Jesus with those who don't know Him.
7. I understand that by completing the online membership registration, and acknowledging that I have read and align with the mission, vision, strategy and statements of belief, and signing the membership covenant, I have completed the membership class requirement.

To sign the membership covenant, please **scan the QR code below** or visit **hf.church/membership**. Completing your membership registration online helps us keep an accurate record of your information and covenant. Please let us know if you need assistance in filling out the online registration and covenant.

JOIN THE
MOVEMENT
BECOME A MEMBER


Scan Me



NOTES





Love God, Love People

Last week at the trailhead, we learned that the mission of Highlands Fellowship is **“To Help People Experience Life With Jesus”**. We also discovered that our purpose, the reason God put us on this earth, is **to glorify God and enjoy Him forever**. This purpose can only be fulfilled in our lives by placing our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from our sins. This is the most important decision each of us will make in our life, but it is only the beginning of our journey of following the Way, living as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Your life and your faith should be melded together. Does it feel like yours is? Think about that for a minute.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A DISCIPLE?

We believe Jesus calls us to be disciples who make disciples. This is called **DISCIPLESHIP**, but what does it really mean to be a disciple? Let's take another look at the two biblical principles we learned last week that guide us as followers of Jesus.

The Great Commandment

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. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. **Matthew 22:37 – 40 (NIV)**

The Great Commission

"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." **Matthew 28:19 – 20a (NIV)**

The Greek word for "disciple" can be translated as a "learner, pupil, or apprentice." A disciple is a devoted follower of Jesus. While we believe this simplifies our understanding, we do not want to convey that this is always easy. Just as the Great Commandment can be said, "Love God, Love People" (simple), ALL the law and prophets hang on this (not easy).

We can see from the biblical principles above that a disciple of Jesus is someone who:

- Loves the Lord (with all their heart, soul, and mind)
- Loves their neighbor (as themselves)
- Learns from Jesus (by studying His Word)
- Lives like Jesus (by doing what He taught us to do)

THE HELPER OF A DISCIPLE

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live as disciples of Jesus.

You may be looking at that list of characteristics of a disciple and thinking to yourself, "That is impossible! I can't live like Jesus!" And, you would be exactly right! The truth is that in and of ourselves, none of us are able to live the Christian life. That is why the Father sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to live as disciples of Jesus.

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” **John 14:16 - 17 (NKJV)**

If you go back to the diagram on page six from last week, you will see that once we receive salvation from our sins through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, we immediately receive the Holy Spirit into our lives. He is our guarantee of eternal life and our power for victorious living.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. **Romans 8:9 - 11 (ESV)**

Jesus sets a high bar for living as His disciple, but He doesn't leave us to do it in our own strength. The Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out and empowers us with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead to live a life that looks like Jesus!

THE HEART OF A DISCIPLE

So, how do we access the power of the Holy Spirit? His power is always available to us as saved children of God, but we don't always live as though it is.

...but be filled with the Spirit. **Ephesians 5:18b (KJV)**

We are commanded in Scripture to be filled with the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit. We do this by making a daily, sometimes moment by moment, choice to surrender our entire being to the Lord.

Surrender is the key to the abundant, purpose-filled life.

Surrender is the key that unlocks the power we need for Spirit-filled, victorious living. As we deny our selfish, fleshly desires and submit our hearts to the authority of King Jesus, we will experience the abundant, purpose-filled life He has promised us!

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it." **Luke 9:23 – 24 (NKJV)**

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. **Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)**

As we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will be produced in our lives:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **Galatians 5:16 – 17 (ESV)**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22 – 25 (ESV)**



Surrender is the mark of a disciple of Jesus.

To surrender means to give up or yield to the power or will of someone else. We can't be the director of our own lives and live as a disciple of Jesus. We must submit to His will!

"And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." **Luke 14:27 (NKJV)**

The charts below help us visualize what it looks like to live life with and without Christ on the throne of our hearts. In this first chart, we see someone who has received Christ as their Lord and Savior. He is in their life, but they haven't surrendered to His will. They are calling the shots in their life, instead of letting Him sit on the throne of their hearts. The result is an unfulfilled life without purpose.

Self-Directed Life

- Legalistic attitude
- Impure thoughts
- Jealousy
- Guilt
- Worry
- Discouragement
- Critical spirit
- Frustration



- Aimlessness
- Fear
- Life is self-centered
- Unbelief
- Disobedience
- Loss of love for God + others
- Poor prayer life
- No desire for Bible Study

In this second chart, we see someone who has received Christ as their Lord and Savior and whose heart is fully devoted to Him. They are surrendered to the leading of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to call the shots in their life. The result is a fruitful life, full of purpose!

Christ-Directed Life

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness



- Self-control
- Life is Christ-centered
- Empowered by Holy Spirit
- Introduces others to Christ
- Has effective prayer life
- Understands God's Word
- Trusts God
- Obeys God

The Christian life of a disciple is only possible when we begin by loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, minds, and strength. As we give Him his rightful place in our heart, He will empower us, by His Spirit, to live like a disciple of Jesus.

THE HABITS OF A DISCIPLE

As we surrender our hearts to the Lord daily, we are then ready to implement habits into our lives that help transform us to look more like Jesus. Habits (regular tendencies or practices; something a person does often in a regular and repeated way) alone will not produce transformation in our lives. However, if we approach each habit with a devoted heart and practice them faithfully, the Holy Spirit will use them to produce spiritual fruit in our lives.

We'll group the habits of a disciple into two categories: Worship (habits that grow a heart for God) and Fellowship (habits that grow a heart for one another). First, let's focus on Worship.

WORSHIP

As we saw in the Great Commandment, the first characteristic of a disciple is someone who loves the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind. This is what we call **WORSHIP**. Worship means to revere someone or something, to show deep respect and admiration. In Scripture, the most commonly used word for worship means to “bow down.” When we worship our great God, we put Him in His rightful place in our lives and bow down before Him with grateful and obedient hearts.

There are several habits laid out in Scripture that help us grow our heart of worship for our Lord.

What are the HABITS that grow my HEART for GOD?

READING THE BIBLE

The Bible is the living, inerrant Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for “inspired” literally means “God-breathed.” The Bible is our source for absolute truth, our authority in every situation, our guide for daily life, and our comfort during times of sorrow.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16 – 17 (NKJV)

In a world full of lies and deception, the Word of God is the standard by which we must measure everything. If what we have been told or taught does not line up with what God has taught in His Word, then it must be dismissed as false.

You may be wondering, “If the Bible is the very Word of God spoken to us and reading it is that important, where do I begin?” Beginning a Bible study habit can be overwhelming at first, but if you approach your time in God’s Word with the following pointers, you will begin to hunger for time in His Word and presence!

HOW TO STUDY GOD’S WORD EFFECTIVELY

1. Start With Prayer

Quieting our hearts and minds is one of the greatest battles we face every time we sit down to engage with God’s Word. We must enter into our time with Him with a heart that is ready to both listen and obey.

Prepare your heart for the Word by always starting with prayer, asking God to remove any distractions and to cleanse you from any sin that would keep you from hearing His truth. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word, giving you ears to hear and eyes to see what He wants to reveal to you.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” **Luke 8:8b (NKJV)**

So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. **James 1:21 (NLT)**

But a natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. **1 Corinthians 2:14 (NASB)**

2. Interpret & Apply the Scriptures

Good Bible study involves more than quickly reading through a passage as you would any other book. Take your time, reading the passage carefully, and re-reading the passage as the Holy Spirit begins to open your eyes to its meaning.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:20 – 21 (NKJV)

Context is critical when studying the Bible. Scripture always interprets Scripture. This means you must always read Scripture in light of the entire Bible, not just picking and choosing certain verses to say what you want to hear in the moment. The Bible can never mean what it never meant. Using proper principles and methods to interpret Scripture is referred to as “hermeneutics”. The purpose of biblical hermeneutics is to teach us how to properly interpret and apply the Scripture.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

There are three questions you should ask each time you study a passage of Scripture in order to use proper biblical hermeneutics:

1. What did it mean to the original audience?

(Who was the original audience? Who was speaking in this passage? What was the culture, time, and location? Was this before or after Jesus’ death and resurrection?)

2. What is the underlying timeless principle?

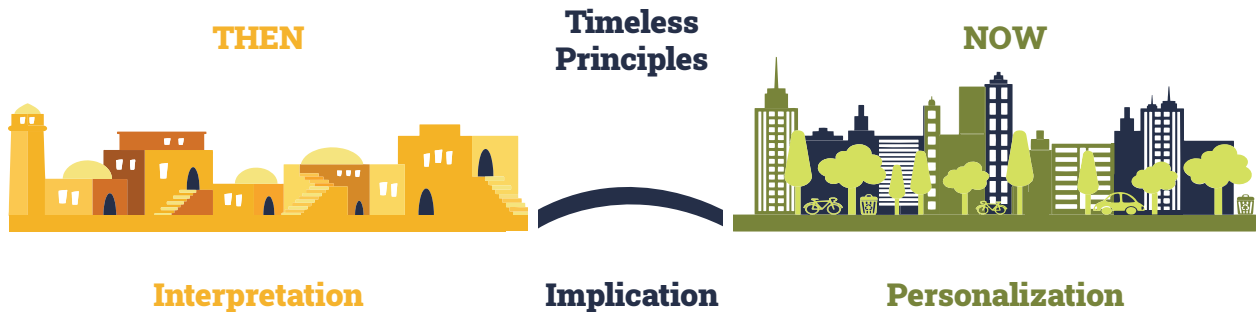
(How does the original message fit into the context of the entire narrative of Scripture? What is the core principle taught in this passage that was true both then and is true for us today?)

3. How does this principle apply to me today?

(How should my life be shaped and formed by this principle? What is being affirmed in my life? What needs to change in my life? What practical steps can I take to put this principle into action?)

How to Apply Scripture

THE APPLICATION BRIDGE



3. Commit to Obey God's Word

Bible study is more than an intellectual exercise solely for the purpose of increasing our head knowledge. Reading God's Word should be a life-changing experience. As the Holy Spirit begins to reveal how the passage you are studying applies to your specific situation, be prepared and committed to obey whatever He tells you.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
James 1:22 (ESV)

Meditation, continuing to dwell upon the Scripture passage you have read and to turn it over in your mind, is an effective way of keeping the Scripture before you so you can live it out. Memorization of Scripture is also a helpful tool so you can recall the verse to mind when you are in the middle of a real-life situation.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.
Psalms 119:11 (NKJV)

If we do not take steps to apply and obey what we have learned, we have missed the whole purpose of reading God's Word!

PRAYER

Prayer is the habit set forth in Scripture for communication and communion with our Heavenly Father. It is simply having a conversation with God. Though a simple concept, there are many misconceptions surrounding the habit of prayer. Before we look at what prayer is meant to be, let's take a quick look at what it is not.

PRAYER IS NOT:

- Approaching God as a genie, asking Him to grant all of our desires and wishes
- An eloquent performance to impress God and others
- A repetition of meaningless, thoughtless phrases
- A passive, meditative experience or reflection

“And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.” **Matthew 6:7 – 8 (ESV)**



HOW TO PRAY

So, how are we to pray? The disciples asked Jesus the same question, and He gave them this model for prayer, which we know as the Lord's Prayer:

“Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’”

Matthew 6:9 - 13 (ESV)

This is not meant to be a repetitive prayer we recite without thinking. Rather, it is a guide for how to approach our Father in prayer.

PRAISE

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” **Matthew 6:9b (ESV)**

Jesus teaches us to begin our prayer with praise. To “hallow” means to “set apart, to deem as special.” We start by praising God for who He is and thanking Him for all He has done. As we begin to praise and worship Him for who He is, we remember who it is we are praying to, the One who is both able and willing to provide everything we need and whose will is perfect.

SURRENDER

“Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”
Matthew 6:10 (ESV)

Next, we are to pray for God’s Kingdom to come and will to be done, on earth just as it is in heaven. This involves surrender of our own will and submission to our Father’s will. Before we submit our needs and requests to Him, we must make sure our heart is aligned with His Kingdom purpose. Remember, our purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Our requests should bring glory to His name and promote His Kingdom on earth!

SUPPLICATION

After we have praised our God and surrendered to His will, we are then ready to bring our needs and requests before Him. “Supplication” means “request or petition.” There are three types of supplication found in the Lord’s Prayer:

1. PROVISION

“Give us this day our daily bread” **Matthew 6:11 (ESV)**

We are to ask and depend on God to meet our daily needs. Notice that Jesus teaches us to pray for our “daily” needs, not our weekly, monthly, or yearly needs. We are to come to Him each day, asking for the strength, wisdom, and resources we need to fulfill His purpose for us that day.

2. CONFESSION

“and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Matthew 6:12 (ESV)

A habitual lifestyle of sin hurts our walk with the Lord, brings destruction in our lives, and negatively affects those around us. When we sin and God convicts us of unholy attitudes or actions, we must be quick to confess those to the Lord, repent, or turn from them, and accept His forgiveness. Through daily confession, we keep “short accounts of sin” with God.

Not only are we to receive forgiveness for our sins, but we are also to grant forgiveness to others. If while we are in prayer, God brings to mind someone we have not forgiven, we must also confess that and make it right. We cannot allow bitterness to reside in our hearts, or it will negatively affect our walk as a disciple of Jesus.

3. PROTECTION

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Matthew 6:13 (ESV)

As Christians, we face a spiritual battle every day. Satan wants to defeat us through temptation and fear. Jesus teaches us to pray for protection so we will have the confidence to face every situation that comes our way. We read in 1 John 4:4 (NKJV) that “...He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

The Lord’s Prayer is a great model to follow as we talk with our Father. There are many other types of prayers modeled in Scripture as well, including intercessory (Ephesians 6:18), lament (Lamentations, Psalm 130), gratitude (Psalm 107:1), conversational (Psalm 145:18), contemplative (2 Corinthians 3:18), silent (Habakkuk 2:20, Isaiah 41:1), asking (Matthew 7:7 – 8), and examining prayer (Psalm 139). Prayer is meant to be a conversation with the Lord that transforms our thoughts and actions to be more like Christ.

SILENCE & SOLITUDE

Another important habit for growing our heart for God is taking time for silence and solitude. We do this by intentionally abstaining from noise and interaction, embracing time alone with the Lord. There are so many distractions in our world today, whether it be our phones, social media, responsibilities at work and home, or streaming our favorite show. It is vital that we schedule intentional time away from these distractions and structure our day around our walk with God. Even Jesus set aside time to be with His Father. How much more should we?

But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. **Luke 5:16 (NLT)**

FASTING

Fasting is another habit that helps us focus our hearts and minds on the Lord. Fasting is giving up food (or something else) for a period of time in order to focus on God. It is a means of humbling ourselves before the Lord, denying our flesh, and depending on God. The goal of fasting is never to impress others with how spiritual we are, but to seek our Father and feast on His goodness. During your fast, it is helpful to practice some of the heart habits we've discussed: Bible study, prayer, and solitude.

"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." **Matthew 6:16 – 18 (ESV)**

GIVING GENEROUSLY

Generosity is returning part of what God has given to us – our time, talent, and resources. Everything we have comes from God. He owns it all; we are simply the managers.

For "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." **1 Corinthians 10:26 (NLT)**

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." **Luke 12:34 (NKJV)**

Giving is an act of worship, reflecting our trust in God to provide all we need and our gratitude for all He has given us. When we give cheerfully and sacrificially of our resources, time, and talent, God is glorified and pleased with our gift. Paul described the gifts given to him by the Philippians in this way:

...They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:18b (NLT)

Our time, gifts, and talents: We each have gifts and talents that were given to us to be used to serve in the Kingdom of God. Our talents are what we are naturally good at doing, our strengths. Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to followers of Jesus to meet the needs of others. We will learn more about these gifts in next week's meet-up. Giving of our time, the most precious gift we have, is also a form of generosity.

Our resources: Often, our greatest struggle in our walk with Christ is our finances. All of our lives revolve around money – making it, spending it, giving it, sharing it. Putting God first in our finances is the only time we're given permission to "test" what's written in the Bible.

"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated Me! But you ask, 'What do You mean? When did we ever cheat You?' You have cheated Me of the tithes and offerings due to Me...Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in My Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put Me to the test!" **Malachi 3:8, 10 (NLT)**

The word "tithe" means a tenth. Scripture teaches us that we are to give the first tenth, or ten percent, of our income to the Lord. Tithing the first part of our income expresses our trust in God with everything we have, including our finances.

An offering is anything we give to the Lord above our tithe. This could be to the church, a charity, or to someone in need. We should always be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we look for opportunities to give an offering beyond our tithe, with a cheerful heart. He may burden your heart for a special need or a specific person. It is always more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)!

God doesn't need anything we have; His desire is to see that we are following His commands and putting Him first. As we give generously, we live out our purpose of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

HEART HABIT APPLICATION (WORSHIP):

We've talked about several habits to grow your heart for God. Right now, let's put a couple of these habits into practice. Follow the steps below to see how the Heart Habit takes shape in your life.

Start With Prayer: Give thanks for who God is and where you see Him at work in your life. Ask for guidance to gain insight and come with a heart that is willing to listen and obey.

Read Passage: John 15:1 – 8 (NLT)

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in Me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in Me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father."

Interpret & Apply The Scriptures: (See worksheet on pages 39, 40 and 41.)

1. What did it mean to the original audience?

(A few hints: Jesus is the one speaking in this passage. He is speaking to His disciples on the night of His arrest, most likely as they were walking from the Upper Room, through the streets of Jerusalem, toward the Garden of Gethsemane.)

2. What is the underlying timeless principle?

(How does the original message fit into the context of the entire narrative of Scripture? What is the core principle taught in this passage that was true both then and is true for us today?)

3. How does this principle apply to me today?

(How should my life be shaped and formed by this principle? What is being affirmed in my life? What needs to change in my life?)

Commit To Obey:

What is one step you will commit to take this week to obey what God revealed to you through this passage?

FELLOWSHIP

The second characteristic of a disciple, as we saw in the Great Commandment, is loving your neighbor as yourself. As we learned in our last session, the church is a family, and we belong to one another. God created us for community, and we need each other to effectively live as disciples that look like Jesus. This is why **FELLOWSHIP** is so important. Fellowship comes from the Greek word, *koinonia*, and means shared participation within a community. As we take time to fellowship with one another, our hearts will grow in love for one another, as well as for our Lord Jesus. Our love for one another is actually proof of our love for God:

“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
John 13:35 (NLT)

The Bible lays out several habits for biblical fellowship that help grow our heart for one another.

What are the HABITS that grow my HEART for OTHERS?

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

The most helpful way to care for one another is to pray for/with them. To pray for one another is to love them unconditionally, just as we are called to do.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.
Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. **James 5:16 (NLT)**

BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER

Jesus taught us the Golden Rule in Matthew 7:12 (NIV) – “do to others what you would have them do to you.” That’s the simplest explanation of kindness. Showing kindness to one another brings a ray of sunshine into the shadows. Kindness is putting others’ needs ahead of your own.

Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. **Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)**

Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. **Galatians 6:10 (NLT)**

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

What is encouragement? The root of the word is *en*, “make or put in,” and *corage*, “courage or heart” - when we encourage someone, we are inserting courage to help make them strong. Encouragement is more than a compliment; it is affirming what we see God doing in them. As we seek to encourage one another, we help others see the world a little brighter, gain hope in a hopeless situation, and find strength to move forward. It’s used to point out the grace in our lives, helping us to see God’s promises in any situation we may face.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up...
1 Thessalonians 5:11a (NIV)

GATHER WITH ONE ANOTHER

Another way we grow in our hearts for one another is by worshiping and gathering together each week. As we lift up the name of our Lord together in worship, our hearts are encouraged and reminded of the greatness of our God. As we hear the Word preached and pray with one another, we are inspired to continue following our Lord faithfully, being fruitful in every good work. At Highlands, we have weekly worship gatherings on Sunday mornings.

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, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.
Hebrews 10:24 – 25 (NLT)

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. **Colossians 3:16 (ESV)***



It is also important to surround yourself with some friends that can help you follow Jesus! We encourage each of you to be a part of a small group of people where you can share real concerns, support one another, encourage each other, and provide accountability in your personal walk with Jesus.

*They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity — all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. **Acts 2:46 – 47 (NLT)***

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. **Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 12 (NIV)***

CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

Worry. Grief. Strain of daily life. Guilt. These are all burdens we carry around with us. Life threatens to overwhelm us on occasion. When life gets too heavy to carry on alone, we are to care for one another by supporting and loving each other. What does that look like? Compassion in Action - Sometimes it's just sitting beside a friend and holding their hand, silent but present. Sometimes it's stopping by the grocery store and picking up supplies for dinner or maybe you mow the yard. Perhaps you provide transportation to work or help with a car repair bill. Willingness to bear one another's burdens can oftentimes be the difference in them pressing on or giving up.

Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.
Philippians 2:4 (NLT)

Not only should we support one another during difficult seasons, but we should also be willing to celebrate as we see God at work in each other's life. The Bible teaches that we are to rejoice in what God is doing in the lives of others.

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.
Romans 12:15 (NLT)

SHARPEN ONE ANOTHER

As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. **Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)**

We all need people around us who know us well enough to speak hard truths, things we need to hear but don't want to hear. We need friends who will walk alongside us as we struggle with behaviors taking us down the wrong path. As difficult as it may be, hard conversations are necessary for growth. Accountability from our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ will help us become mature disciples who live and look like Jesus!

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church. **Ephesians 4:15 (NLT)**

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.
Proverbs 27:6 (NLT)

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

When someone does something to upset us, it can be hard to let that go and move on. Our usual reaction is to think of ourselves – my hurt, my loss. We seek to withhold forgiveness because they're wrong and I'm right. However, we are to "forgive as Christ forgave us." Not that forgiveness excuses their behavior, not that we forget the incident. But that we realize we have needed forgiveness for our actions against our neighbor and, more importantly, against God.

Then Peter came to Him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!" **Matthew 18:21 – 22 (NLT)**

"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." **Luke 7:47 (ESV)**

Jesus told a story of a king who felt compassion on a man in his kingdom and decided to forgive his huge, massive debt. Then, the guy whose debt had just been wiped clean went to his neighbor who owed him a small amount of money and demanded that it all be paid back that very day. This upset the folks in the village because they knew what the king had previously done for him. The king called him on the carpet and put him in prison - not because of the amount of the debt, but because the forgiven man did not extend forgiveness to another.

"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart." **Matthew 18:35 (ESV)**

RESTORE ONE ANOTHER

We are all susceptible to the glamor of sin. It smells good, looks good, tastes good. However, when we swallow it, it becomes bitter. Be the friend who steps out to warn one another when they are being pulled away into sin and are seemingly unaware. Walk alongside them so they do not get caught in the glamor, but do so carefully and with love and gentleness.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:1 – 2 (ESV)

HEART HABIT APPLICATION (FELLOWSHIP):

As you begin to apply these Heart Habits to your daily life, here are three questions to consider:

1. What is God doing **IN** you (to change your heart)?
2. What is God doing **AROUND** you (in the lives of your church family)?
3. What is God doing **THROUGH** you (to love your neighbor as yourself)?

As you think about these questions, make some notes and be prepared to share during your meet-up this week.

INTERPRET + APPLY THE SCRIPTURES

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE

WRITE OUT YOUR BIBLE VERSE OR PASSAGE

INTERPRETATION

WHAT DID IT MEAN TO THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE?

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who was the original audience?

What was the purpose of the book/chapter?

What was the meaning to the original audience?

IMPLICATION

WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING TIMELESS PRINCIPLE?

*How does the original message fit into the context of the entire narrative of Scripture?
What is the core principle taught in this passage that was true then and is still true for us today?*

PERSONALIZATION

HOW DOES THIS PRINCIPLE APPLY TO ME TODAY?

*How should my life be shaped and formed by this principle? What is being affirmed in my life?
What needs to change in my life? What practical steps can I take to put this principle into action?*

PRAYER Write out your prayer of response to the Lord based on what He is speaking to you in this passage.

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What was the purpose of the book/chapter?

What was the meaning to the original audience?

IMPLICATION

WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING TIMELESS PRINCIPLE?

*How does the original message fit into the context of the entire narrative of Scripture?
What is the core principle taught in this passage that was true then and is still true for us today?*

PERSONALIZATION

HOW DOES THIS PRINCIPLE APPLY TO ME TODAY?

*How should my life be shaped and formed by this principle? What is being affirmed in my life?
What needs to change in my life? What practical steps can I take to put this principle into action?*

PRAYER Write out your prayer of response to the Lord based on what He is speaking to you in this passage.

NOTES





Stay in SHAPE

As we have traveled along the Path these last couple weeks, we have discovered our purpose, **to glorify God and enjoy Him forever**, and we have learned the **habits that grow our HEART for God (worship) and for others (fellowship)**. We hope that Highlands has truly begun to feel like home to you and that you are becoming more connected to our great God and to our church family. Today, we continue down the Path of following the Way at our next trail marker, **HEALTH**.

At the trailhead, we discovered that the church is the body of Christ. We learned that we are not an organization, but an organism. Christ is the Head of the body, and we, as members of that body, belong to one another. After we have been born again into the family of God and joined a local body of believers through church membership, we are then called to discover our unique **SHAPE** and serve one another. This is called **MINISTRY**.

As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10 (NKJV)

The Bible teaches that the **HEALTH** of the body of Christ will be determined by the faithfulness of each member to fulfill his or her unique ministry. Just as the human body needs all of its members to function properly, so does the body of Christ (the church) need all of its members to function properly.

Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Ephesians 4:15 – 16 (NLT)

Notice in this verse that our ministry must be done in truth and love. As we learned at the first trail marker, everything we do must come from a **HEART** of love for God and for one another and be based on the truth of God's Word. Without love, our ministry will be meaningless.

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:3 (ESV)

By using our unique gifts and talents to love and serve one another, we obey the Great Commandment of loving God and loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37 - 40).

IDENTIFYING YOUR SHAPE

You may be thinking to yourself, "This sounds great! I'd love to contribute to the health of my church family, but I don't know where to begin!" God has uniquely designed each of us, including you, and has a specific purpose for you in His body! As we discover how God made us, we will be able to discern what He intends for us to do.

"Your hands shaped me and made me." Job 10:8a (NIV)

But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for special purposes and some for common use? Romans 9:20 – 21 (NIV)

Our SHAPE is determined by several factors.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

1 Corinthians 12:4 – 6 (NLT)

We believe that your SHAPE will help determine your ministry. So, what is SHAPE? There are five factors that influence who you are. We have an acrostic to make it easier to remember these five things:

Spiritual Gifts What am I gifted to do?

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT)

Hearth What do I love to do?

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. **Philippians 2:13 (NLT)**

Abilities What natural abilities do I have?

I have filled him with the Spirit of God, giving him great wisdom, ability, and expertise in all kinds of crafts. **Exodus 31:3 (NLT)**

Personality Where does my personality best suit me to serve?

No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit ...

1 Corinthians 2:11 (NLT)

Experiences What experiences have I had?

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 (NIV)**

Let's spend some time looking at how these five things have shaped you for ministry. After gaining a deeper understanding of each of the five factors that influence your SHAPE, you will be given the opportunity to take an assessment that helps you identify your unique SHAPE!

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

What is a spiritual gift?

It is a special ability, given by the Holy Spirit to every believer at their conversion, to be used to minister to others and therefore build up the body of Christ. Spiritual gifts are not for our benefit but for the benefit of others.

A spiritual gift is different from a talent. Many people don't know they have a spiritual gift, but they do. It may be hidden, and you will have to unwrap it.

We believe that one of the primary ways to recognize your spiritual gift is by getting involved in ministry. Many people try to figure out their spiritual gift and then serve in ministry. We say the exact opposite. As you serve in ministry, you'll find out what your gifts are.

While our ministry service is best fulfilled when we use our primary spiritual gift, we should also be willing to serve in any area where we're needed. For example, some people have the gift of encouragement, they simply know when someone is hurting, needs a kind word, or someone to share their concerns with, and they act on that. But all of us are called at times to share a word of encouragement to our friends, family and neighbors, even strangers on the street. It's not our primary gift, but we're willing to do so because of our maturity in Christ.

Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unproductive. Titus 3:14 (NASB)

The way to discover your spiritual gift is by simply putting yourself out there and experimenting with different areas of service. People will respond to you when you're serving through your spiritual gift, and you'll realize you've found your niche. You will discover the Holy Spirit of God empowering you to minister to others in a way that almost feels effortless, as He works in and through you.

HEART

Now, let's talk about the role our HEART plays in our SHAPE. My heart is the real me! Physiologically, each of us has a unique heartbeat. Likewise, God gave each of us a unique emotional "heartbeat" that races when we encounter activities, subjects, or circumstances that interest us. We instinctively feel deeply about some things and not about others.

Before we were saved, our old "heart", our passions, were guided by our sinful flesh. A heart that hasn't been renewed by the Lord can never be trusted!

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"
Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)

When the Lord saved and redeemed us, He gave us a new heart!

Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
Ezekiel 36:26 (NASB)

Our God-given heartbeat serves as an internal guidance system for our lives. It determines what your interests are and what will bring you the most satisfaction and fulfillment. It also motivates you to pursue certain activities, subjects, and environments. However, as we learned in last week's study, we must choose to submit our hearts to the Lord each day. Though we have been redeemed and renewed by the Lord, we will still have a sin nature within us as long as we live on this earth. Until we are glorified by our Father in heaven one day, we have to daily reject our "sinful passions" and delight ourselves in the Lord. As we do this, He will give us His heart for others. He will place unique burdens on our heart for specific needs that He wants to meet in others through us!

Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalms 37:4 (ESV)

Our heart determines what we say, how we feel, and how we act; we must guard it! Our heart must always be guided by Scripture. God's Word will keep our hearts in line with God's will; it exposes and purifies our innermost thoughts and motives.

For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. **Matthew 12:34b (NIV)**

For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, even penetrating as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

If you are like most people, you have never taken time to sort out and identify the things you are good at and motivated to accomplish. The key to understanding your heartbeat is to look at your past accomplishments. As you work through your HEART Assessment, think about the times when you feel like you deeply loved what you were doing, that you were perfectly fitted for what you were doing.

There are a lot of things that we think we'd hate that we actually love once we do them. You might think you'd never have a heart for working with middle schoolers, but you get in a group with them and recognize, "I can't believe it. I actually love this!" Always be open to new passions and burdens the Lord may be placing on your heart today!

ABILITIES

Your abilities are the natural talents with which you were born. All of our abilities come from God. Just like your spiritual gifts, your abilities are important in helping you determine your SHAPE and best fit in ministry. The only difference is that you were given them at birth.

And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills. **Exodus 31:3 (NIV)**

One of the most common reasons people give for not getting involved in ministry is, "I just don't have any abilities to offer." Nothing could be further from the truth. The key is matching your abilities with the right ministry! Everyone is good at something. Maybe you just don't know what it is or you take it for granted.

When you take the Abilities Assessment, you will see several specialized abilities listed. As you go through this list, check the ones you think you have. Then, narrow it down to the top two or three. What are your specialized abilities? Have you taught any classes? What is your most valuable asset? Which of these abilities are you most excited about God using to help others? If you're still not sure, ask someone who is close to you. Often those around us can see our abilities better than we can!

PERSONALITY

The fourth area we are going to look at is your personality. It's obvious that God has not used a cookie cutter to stamp out people in a process of uniformity. He loves variety—just look around. And there is not a right or wrong temperament. We need opposites to balance the church.

A good example of this is to think about two people who have the gift of administration, organization. They're good organizers—that's their spiritual gift. They're both motivated to work with teenagers. So they have the same gift, and they have the same heart. But one of them is an introvert, and one of them is an extrovert. Who do you think will best fit in with student ministry? BOTH! The SHAPE Profile helps determine in which area of student ministry each person will thrive.

Some people do not experience ministry satisfaction because what they're doing is inconsistent with their personality. We all have an ingrained, set pattern. We can't expect thinkers to be feelers or extroverts to be introverts. Nor should we push people who like variety to be in a routine ministry. If your personality is one type and you're put into the opposite area, no one will be happy.

EXPERIENCES

One of the most overlooked factors in determining the ministry God has for you is your past experience, particularly your hurts and the problems you've overcome with God's help. Since some of our greatest life messages come out of our weaknesses, not our strengths, we should pay close attention to what we've learned in the "school of hard knocks." Nothing in our lives is ever wasted, and many folks discover that God has been putting together the pieces to prepare them for a unique ministry, long before they were even saved. We should use our experiences, both good and bad, to help others.

*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 (NIV)***

It doesn't say all things are good. It says that *"in all things God works."* Even in the bad things, *"God works for the good of those who love Him."* That means God never wastes an experience. It means that even our bad experiences are used by God to fulfill His Kingdom purpose. He never wastes a hurt. He wants you to be open to ministering to people who are going through what you've already been through!

*Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **Philippians 1:12 (NIV)***

In your EXPERIENCES Assessment, we will look at five experiences you've had: Educational, Work, Spiritual, Ministry, and Painful Experiences.

Educational Experiences

*Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life. **Proverbs 4:13 (NIV)***

Work Experiences

*And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **Mark 1:16 – 17 (NKJV)***

Spiritual Experiences

As we grow in the knowledge of God's will through the study of His Word, we gain the wisdom and spiritual understanding that is required to live a fruitful life, ever increasing in our personal knowledge of God.

*We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God. **Colossians 1:9b – 10 (NIV)***

Ministry Experiences

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Hebrews 6:10 (NKJV)

Painful Experiences

The Bible says God actually allows you to go through difficult situations, circumstances, problems, and trials. He comforts you and teaches you in those situations so that you can turn around and minister to the very people who are going through situations you've been through.

God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. **2 Corinthians 1:3b – 4 (NLT)**

Now that you have gained a better understanding of the five factors that influence your SHAPE, you are going to have the opportunity to take some assessments to determine your God-given SHAPE. The link below will take you to our online SHAPE Assessment.

Before you begin, take a minute to seek God in prayer, asking Him to guide you as you fill out the assessment and to reveal the gifts and abilities He has given to you. As you take the assessment, be open to any new passions or callings God may be placing on your heart. The Creator who has uniquely designed you does not want to keep His will for your life a secret. He will reveal His specific plan for you in His Kingdom, your purpose for glorifying His name and enjoying Him forever!

Scan QR code or visit HF.Church/SHAPE to take your SHAPE assessments.



INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

Now that you have discovered your SHAPE, you have a better understanding of how God has designed you for ministry. It is important to remember that the results of these assessments are only a guide to help us better understand how God has created us, not an end-all, be-all. You should never let your test results limit what God wants to do in and through you.

Remember that all good gifts come from our Father, and He is not limited in what He can do through you, regardless of your natural abilities, talents, and personality type. Also, remember that when you received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you received the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and He resides in you! He is the ultimate Gift, and He can empower you with numerous spiritual gifts and abilities throughout your life to accomplish what He desires to do through you in various seasons.

For example, you may have discovered today that you have the spiritual gift of administration. That's great! This helps you to know that God desires to use you to help in the administration of His church. However, this does not mean that administration is the ONLY thing you can ever do for the Kingdom of God. 10 years from now, there may be a different need in the church body that the Spirit of God is fully capable of gifting and empowering you to meet. Use your SHAPE as a guide, but never let it pigeonhole you or keep you from stepping into the "abundantly more" the Lord wants to do in and through you, for His glory.

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20 – 21 (ESV)

NEXT STEPS

We learned that the spiritual gifts and abilities God gives us are for the benefit of the church, not for our own glory or benefit. The HEALTH of the church is determined by our faithfulness in using our God-given SHAPE. We are ALL called to serve in the church, not just those who are called to full-time vocational ministry.

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. 1 Corinthians 14:12 (NKJV)

There is often confusion on whether we are to minister INSIDE the church or OUTSIDE the church. The answer is BOTH! The Bible teaches we are to help our fellow brothers and sisters grow in Christ AND to go and make disciples of all the world.

When we faithfully use our gifts to serve the church, we help build up the body of Christ and equip one another for ministry. Ephesians 4:12 – 13 (ESV) explains the purpose of our gifts is *“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”* Typically, we view health as something we achieve by taking in (nutrition, medicine, vitamins, etc.). However, the upside down Kingdom approach in Scripture teaches that our health increases as we pour out and serve one another, rather than simply take in for ourselves.

Ministering to one another is essential for discipleship of the body. As we serve one another, we become unified in our faith and grow in our knowledge of God, becoming mature disciples of Christ who love and live like Jesus! We are then equipped to go out into the world to be a light in the darkness, sharing the HOPE of our Lord. We will learn more about reaching out to our communities and world at our next meet-up.

Your SHAPE helps you determine what God intends for you to do, both in the church setting and outside the walls. When we use our talents, spiritual gifts, and life experiences to serve one another, we are fulfilling God’s will for our lives. He has gifted each of us uniquely with the express intent to serve one another. We know that serving in ministry feels most comfortable when you are in an area that complements your gifts and talents.

One day God’s going to ask you, “What did you do with what I gave you? What did you do with the gifts, the personality, the heart, the abilities, and the experiences I gave you - how I shaped you for ministry - what did you do with it?” What we all want is to be able to stand before God someday and have Him say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your Master’s happiness!”* (Matthew 25:23 NIV).

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. **Colossians 3:23 – 24 (NIV)**

OVERVIEW OF HOST TEAMS

Each week at Highlands, hundreds of people just like you give their time to serve. Whether it's helping children learn about Jesus on their level at HFKidz, greeting first time guests, or working behind the scenes, every volunteer is making a difference at Highlands! We know you're busy, and a hundred things are competing for your time. But we also know you'll grow in your relationship with Jesus and meet new friends when you start volunteering with a Host Team!

Host Team Members strive to make guests feel welcome and at home, similar to how you would host a gathering in your own home! It's as easy as saying good morning, starting a conversation, holding the door open, sharing a cup of coffee, helping someone who has their hands full, guiding someone who looks lost or new to our church home. Sometimes it's the little things that become memorable and make someone's day a little brighter, all in hopes that they'll experience the love of Jesus and return to our church.

At Highlands, our desire is to **“Help People Experience Life with Jesus”**. Everything we do should reflect that. We strive to break down barriers and eliminate distractions, communicate effectively, and create a place where individuals and families can find hope and salvation through Jesus Christ and grow in their relationship with Him.

Your role, no matter how small you may think, is all part of God's plan and truly makes an eternal difference!

MINISTRY AREAS TO SERVE

- **Adults**

Consisting of many service opportunities, our Host Teams go above and beyond to provide exceptional care to all our HF family. Host Team members realize they are part of something bigger than one person and make it their personal mission to connect with others. From the streets to the seats, on Sundays and during the week, Host Team members welcome folks to our campuses, both physical and online (Parking Team, Greeters, Door Ushers), share a cup of coffee with them (Hospitality, Encouragement, Prayer Team), care for their children and students (HFKidz and HFStudents), all with the intent to help people experience life with Jesus and to make Highlands home.

- **HFStudents**

Our desire is for middle school and high school students to know Jesus while developing deeper relationships and serving others. We strive to meet students where they are in their struggles, joys, activities, and in their homes. It is our goal to inspire and equip families to help raise up the next generation. HFS has Host Team opportunities for first impressions, tech, small group leaders, hospitality / food service and more.

- **HFKidz**

HFKidz ministers to all children, 6 weeks – 5th grade, in-person and on-line. On Sundays, Host Team Volunteers serve in HFKidz, from greeting families, providing safe and secure hallways and classrooms, to leading in worship, teaching and guiding small group discussions. There are numerous ways, both on Sundays and throughout the week, for you to get connected.

- **Celebrate Recovery**

Celebrate Recovery (CR) is a 12-step Christ-centered recovery program that combines the practical steps of AA with the teachings of Jesus Christ to redeem and heal. CR offers a person the opportunity to participate in a group where love and hope combine with God's purpose to mend our lives. It addresses all types of *hurts, habits, and hang-ups* (examples = depression, fear of rejection or abandonment, pornography, dependency on alcohol or drugs, control issues, or abuse mentally, physically or emotionally).

Along with worship music and a recovery lesson/testimony, there are many opportunities to serve within Celebrate Recovery. For those with a smile and open friendliness, we're looking for Greeters and Parkers. There's food/snacks to prepare weekly (shopping, preparing and serving). Come early to help set-up and stay late to tear-down. Seeking recovery and serving each other allows us to draw closer to Jesus, our ultimate Healer.

HEALTH HABIT APPLICATION

- Pray and ask the Lord what ministry He is calling you to serve in to support the health of our church body.
- Commit to taking the next step required to start the process of finding your best fit in ministry (talk to a ministry leader, audition for the worship team, try out a position for a month, etc.)
- Perhaps your SHAPE Profile revealed an area of gifting for service in the church that doesn't currently exist at Highlands. If so, we welcome you to have a conversation with the leaders at your campus at the next meet-up.

Scan QR code or visit HF.Church/VOLUNTEER to learn more.



NOTES





Go and Make Disciples

Over the last few weeks, we have learned our purpose for being on this earth, **to glorify God and enjoy Him forever**, discovered the **habits that grow our HEART for God (worship) and for others (fellowship)**, and identified our unique God-given **SHAPE** so we can commit to serving and contributing to the **HEALTH** of our church (**ministry**). That brings us to our last trail marker along the Path, **HOPE**.

As outlined in the Great Commission, we are called to join God as He builds His kingdom by sharing the **HOPE** of the gospel and making disciples. This involves both **EVANGELISM** (proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Jesus) and **DISCIPLESHIP** (helping others learn what it means to love and live as a disciple of Jesus).

“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.” **Matthew 28:19 – 20a (NIV)**

We often hear that we are to “be the hands and feet of Jesus”. This is because we, the church, are the body of Christ - His hands, His feet, and His witnesses to a lost world in need.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” **Acts 1:8 (NLT)**

Jesus’ desire was for everyone to know the Father, the One who had sent Him. As Jesus explains in John 3:16 (NKJV), a verse most everyone knows, “...God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We are to share this **HOPE**, the gospel of Jesus, in our local communities, our region, and our world.

SENT BY OUR FATHER

GOD IS A SENDING GOD

God sends His people to find people, to draw those far from Him back home. From Abraham to Moses to Jonah, God has demonstrated His sending nature. Jesus was sent by God to restore us, and the Spirit was sent to equip us. The Great Commission calls us to go to the “ends of the earth”, but in reality, the journey begins here. We are called to get out of our comfort zone into our own backyards, our neighborhoods, and around the world.

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go ... to the land I will show you.” **Genesis 12:1 (NIV)**

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!” **Isaiah 6:8 (NIV)**

But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children. And because we are His children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” **Galatians 4:4 – 6 (NLT)**

WE ARE A SENT PEOPLE

We seek to follow the pattern of Jesus. The Lord sent Him to love a lost and dying world, and now He sends us.

Again He said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you.” **John 20:21 (NLT)**

God’s plan has never changed. He always intended to grow His Kingdom, His family, by disciples making disciples. Just as Jesus called His disciples to “fish for people,” to rescue the lost from the dominion of darkness, He also sends us out to share the good news of salvation!

Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow Me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” **Matthew 4:19 (NLT)**

But how can they call on Him to save them unless they believe in Him? And how can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them without being sent? That is why the Scriptures say, “How beautiful are the feet of messengers who bring good news!” **Romans 10:14 – 15 (NLT)**

HABITS TO EXTEND HOPE

COMPASSION TOWARDS PHYSICAL NEEDS

We are to care for those in need—the sick, the hungry, prisoners, strangers, and the poor among us. Meeting the physical needs of those around us is a reflection of our love for God and our neighbor. It is the Great Commandment in action, loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself.

“For I was hungry, and you fed Me. I was thirsty, and you gave Me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me into your home. I was naked, and you gave Me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for Me. I was in prison, and you visited Me.’ Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and give You something to drink? Or a stranger and show You hospitality? Or naked and give You clothing? When did we ever see You sick or in prison and visit You?’ And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to Me!’” **Matthew 25:35 – 40 (NLT)**

As we meet the physical needs of those around us, we reflect the love of Jesus to them, and often, a door is opened to share the good news of the gospel. Jesus met both the physical AND spiritual needs of those around Him. We are to do the same!

MEETING SPIRITUAL NEEDS

The greatest need of every man, woman, boy, and girl in this world is to have their sins forgiven so they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and live with Him forever. We have the privilege of sharing this amazing hope with those who don't know Jesus.

Many folks don't share their faith with others, either because they don't know how or they expect the pastor to do so. However, Jesus commands ALL of us to make disciples in His Kingdom. We must always be ready to share a reason for the hope that lies within us with those around us.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect. 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

It is important to know God's story as laid out in Scripture to be able to share with those who are searching for the truth. It is also helpful to have your own personal story of salvation ready to share as a witness to those who are curious about your faith and what is different about you. Here are some helpful tips for sharing the HOPE of Jesus with others.

KNOW GOD'S STORY

(Creation, Fall, Jesus, Church) - New to New Again

1.) God creates.

Everything was the way God intended it to be. All relationships (God and man, man with one another, man with creation) were perfect.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (NLT)

Then God said, "Let Us make human beings in Our image, to be like Us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:26 – 27 (NLT)

2.) Man rebels.

Instead of letting God be God, Adam & Eve wanted to be God. Satan told them they could be just like Him. Wanting to be their own god, they disobeyed God's command. That created sin which created separation in our relationship with God and one another - all that was perfect was devastated.

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. **Romans 5:12 (NLT)***

*For the wages of sin is death... **Romans 6:23a (NLT)***

SIN BROUGHT DEATH → DEATH = SEPARATION

3.) Jesus restores.

In the climax, Jesus came to do what we could not. He came to repair and restore our broken relationships with God and each other.

*For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. **2 Corinthians 5:19 (NLT)***

*For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of His Son. **Romans 5:10 (NLT)***

4.) Creation renewed.

One day, all the things that were lost will be made new. God will be near to us and dwell with us. We will have perfect unity with each other in a new heaven and a new earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” And the One sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!”

Revelation 21:1 – 5a (NLT)

SHARE YOUR STORY

We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard. **Acts 4:20 (NLT)**

Your story is how you can share your personal experience of life with Jesus. When you talk about how the Lord saved you and changed you, it reveals what God can do. You can share how He has been at work in your life since you got saved, how He has worked miracles in your life, how He has blessed you, and how He has changed you. Everyone’s story is different. Not every story is dramatic, involves drugs and alcohol, or contains tragedy, but every story is personal.

To be able to tell your story, you should write it down and practice sharing it with a group of friends. Tell others, with simplicity, sincerity, and clarity, what God has done in your life since you came to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

Here’s a simple outline you can follow:

- 1. What my life was like before I met Jesus**
(What was life like apart from God? Be brief, don’t dwell on the past.)
- 2. When I accepted Jesus as my Savior**
(This is a great place to include the gospel. You can use helpful tools such as the salvation diagram on page six to describe how you recognized you were a sinner and received forgiveness of sins through Christ’s death on the cross. Be specific.)
- 3. What my life is like now**
(How has Jesus transformed your life for the better?)

If you would like a guide on how to write out your story, scan this QR Code:



WHERE DO I BEGIN?

VISION REMINDER: TO SEE THE TRANSFORMATION OF PEOPLE AND PLACES THROUGH JESUS

People. Who do you know that is far from God? Who are the people you encounter on a daily basis? If we take a minute to pause from our busy schedules, we will recognize the broken and hurting people around us.

Places. Often, we view “missions” to be in far-away-places, but there is a reason God has placed you where you are now. It is not by accident that you have a home in your neighborhood, that your kids are involved in activities (sports, dance, karate, etc.), and you see needs that no one else recognizes.

In the place where you live, take the time to meet a physical need - pick up milk for your elderly neighbor or babysit for a single mom. We can share the love of Jesus with our actions long before we can with our words. Don't stop there, though! Always be ready to share God's story and your story as you sense the Holy Spirit creating opportunities and directing your conversations. Be sensitive to the nudges of the Holy Spirit regarding the physical and spiritual needs around you. Pray over the folks you interact with on a daily basis. Ask the Lord to create opportunities for you to minister to both their physical and spiritual needs and to reveal any needs around you that you may not see.

And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. Hebrews 13:16 (NLT)

"For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said."

Luke 12:12 (NLT)

In John, we see the story of Jesus encountering a woman who had a bad reputation in her hometown; married five times previously and currently with a man she was not married to. Jesus met her at the village well and asked her for a drink. She was surprised that this man was even speaking to her. In the end, Jesus shared with her that He could give her "living water", eternal life; she accepted. John 4:4 – 26 (paraphrase)

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

At Highlands, we desire to represent Christ in our community by showing love for one another! One way we do that is to serve those around us. Often, people "don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." As Jesus taught in John 13:35 (ESV), "...all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." We serve by meeting physical needs, providing support for local agencies and first responders, encouraging our educators, and caring for our foster families.



In addition to meeting the physical needs of those in our community, we also seek to meet the spiritual needs of those we serve. We share the hope of the gospel with those who don't know Jesus as their Savior, pray for those in need, and follow Jesus' command of making disciples by teaching them God's Word. In everything we do, our goal is to share the love of Christ. Our dedication to these efforts is rooted in the belief that by showing kindness and sharing Christ's love, we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of those around us.

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. **James 1:27 (NLT)**

...and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all...

1 Thessalonians 3:12a (ESV)

Perhaps you discovered a particular passion and calling while doing your SHAPE Assessment last week or you know of a particular need or group of people that we don't currently have a ministry for at Highlands. Perhaps God gave you that burden because He wants to use you to meet the need. If this is you, we welcome you to have a conversation with the leaders at your campus at the next meet-up.

GLOBAL OUTREACH

In addition to meeting physical needs in our own communities, our heart for people goes beyond our borders through our global efforts. Going there or coming here, our desire is for everyone everywhere to follow Jesus. We have relationships with strategic leaders in Pakistan, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, Nigeria, Ukraine, Kenya and in the Middle East, along with pastors and leaders in hundreds of churches around the world. We host pastoral leaders at our G3 Conference in Abingdon and travel to global destinations to provide leadership and discipleship training. In addition, we have teams that travel abroad on traditional mission trips that come alongside local churches to minister in their respective communities.



We are all called to help take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Even if you have not been called to go overseas on a mission trip, you can pray for our global partners, support our global ministry, or serve at one of the G3 Conferences held at our church.

Overview of G3

The Global Glory of God (G3) Conference is a vision given to us from the Lord to reach the entire world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The vision includes the command to bring “the man or woman of peace” (influence) from every country to our church, teaching Purpose Driven principles, participating in leadership development, while seeing a Great Commandment/Great Commission church in action. Following the conference, leaders are better equipped to return to their homeland to implement the five purposes of the church as Jesus outlined in the Book of Acts.

Five Global Giants

There are some problems in the world that affect millions of people, and there are a few that affect billions. We call these the five global giants.

The five global giants are:

1. **Spiritual Emptiness** - People living without hope or purpose.
2. **Egocentric Leadership** - Leaders who think that followers exist for them instead of them existing for the followers, a lack of a true statesman we might say. Selfish leaders, little dictators; not servant leaders.
3. **Extreme Poverty** - Half the world today lives on less than two dollars a day. That's over three billion people; countless people go to bed hungry each night.
4. **Pandemic Disease** - Diseases that are spread over wide geographic areas: AIDS, Malaria, Yellow Fever, Polio, Leprosy and Typhus to name just a few. Many of these diseases we learned how to treat, cure and prevent in the 19th century. Much of the world's population is suffering from diseases we know how to treat.
5. **Rampant Illiteracy** - Half of our world is functionally illiterate.

Who can solve these problems? Governments and other political agencies have been trying for years and years but to no avail. We believe the only group with the compassion and the manpower to address these issues is the global church. Working alongside local churches around the world, we can reach communities, tribes, and unreached people groups to tackle these giants.

At Highlands, we use a couple of approaches to combat the global giants, the PEACE Plan & CHE. Both plans are designed to meet physical and spiritual needs in local communities around the world. The approach we use is determined by the specific needs of each location.

PEACE Plan

Jesus gave us the model to address these global giants. What did He do? Jesus didn't just preach. He cared for the oppressed, the poor, sick, aged, blind, and lepers. He cared about the mentally ill, orphans, widows, those imprisoned, and the homeless.

How did Jesus combat these giants? He did five things that make up the PEACE Plan:

“P” Jesus **provided reconciliation** and hope.

“E” He **equipped** servant leaders. He spent three years training 12 men, the disciples. He was the perfect example. He washed their feet.

“A” He **assisted** the poor. In His first sermon at Nazareth, He said, "He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." (Luke 4:18, NKJV)

“C” He **cared** for the sick. Wherever He went, He healed the sick.

“E” He **educated** people. Jesus was a teacher. He taught in the synagogues. He taught on the mountaintops and from a boat.

What Jesus modeled for us is the antidote to the Five Global Giants. He expects His church, 2000 years later, to continue what He began.

CHE (Community Health Evangelism)

Community Health Evangelism (CHE) is a multifaceted approach to ministry that addresses the needs of the whole person - physical, spiritual, emotional and social.

Similar to the PEACE Plan, CHE's training strategies include:

- Empowering people to do things for themselves. This liberates locals from the bondage of the welfare mentality.
- Reaching the whole person, both spiritual dimensions and physical needs.
- Equipping leaders with skills to see their own community's assets and to address multiple needs.
- Developing Community Ownership - CHE teaches people how to identify their own problems and find a way to solve them, using locally available resources.
- Preventive - CHE is designed to prevent diseases for individuals, families, and communities by providing participants with knowledge concerning basic health principles and practices.

HOPE HABIT APPLICATION

1. Write out your story; writing it down prepares you to be able to share when you're presented the opportunity. Use the steps outlined on page 63.
2. Spend some time in prayer, asking God how and where He would have you share His HOPE in the following areas:

- **The People & Places Around You**

(Who has God placed in your life that currently has a physical and/or spiritual need you can help meet?)

- **The Community**

(Which ministry can you join at Highlands to help reach folks in our community? To find out more about community outreach opportunities at Highlands, go to <https://hf.church/local-outreach>.)

- **Globally**

(How is God leading you to become involved in global missions—praying over a specific pastor/country, giving resources, helping with our next G3 Conference, signing up to go on a short-term mission trip, etc.? To find out more about how Highlands is making an impact globally, go to <https://hf.church/missions>.)

THE JOURNEY AHEAD

Congratulations! You made it to the end of the trail! We hope you have come to feel like Highlands is HOME, that you have grown in your HEART for God and others, that you have identified your unique SHAPE to contribute to the HEALTH of our church, and that you have determined with whom and where God is calling you to share His HOPE.

Though this is the end of our time together on this particular Path, the journey has really just begun! Following the Way, Jesus Christ, and living out our purpose is a lifelong experience. As you continue along the path, we want you to know that you are not alone. We as a church are here to walk alongside you, to cheer you on, to challenge you in your walk, and to encourage you to press on daily!

After going through all of this material, you might feel overwhelmed. The best place to start is by committing to take ONE next step. Take some time to seek God and ask Him what is your ONE next step. Come prepared to share this at our next meet-up.

MY NEXT STEP:

THE PATH RESOURCES



To continue "Following the Way", check out these recommended resources and practical suggestions for going further in your discipleship journey.



Scan QR code or visit
hf.church/the-path/path-resources
to learn more.

THE HUB

We have numerous resources to guide you on your path to spiritual maturity. Visit <https://hf.church/hub> to learn more.

NOTES



Group Member Name

Contact Info

Prayer Requests

THE GREAT COMMISSION

*“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.”*

Matthew 28:19 – 20a (NIV)

Highlands
FELLOWSHIP