



Belong | Believe | Become



www.firstapostolic.com

Introduction

Where are you headed? No matter where you've been, you choose where you go next. No matter where you're coming from, your next steps will take you closer to God or further away from Him.

Our goal is to help you see that you don't have to walk these steps alone. No matter what your background is, we encourage you to look at your life as a journey that you walk one day at a time – one step at a time. But you are not alone.

Join with this body of believers and let us take the next step closer to Him together!

Belong | You belong to God

We were created for relationship

We were all created by God (Gen 1:27). Adam and Eve were created and placed in a garden to have relationship with each other and with their creator, God (Gen 2). Satan's temptation caused them to question God and believe that He was withholding something better from them and that if they would instead put their trust in their own ways they could get what God was holding back (Gen 3). This decision to reject God and instead trust in their own ideas and abilities is what we call the fall. This was the blueprint for our human nature. As a result, sin was brought into the earth and the relationship between God and man was broken – not because God was disappointed, mad, or disgusted. Adam and Eve felt shame and as a result separated themselves from God (Gen 3:8) The penalty of sin is a death sentence (Rom 6:23). Adam and Eve should have been punished by death, but our loving God instead transferred their punishment to an animal sacrifice (Gen 3:21). An innocent paid the price for Adam and Eve's sin by shedding his blood. But our all-knowing God already had a plan in place. A savior would come through the seed of Adam that would eventually pay the price of our sin (2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus Loved You Enough to Die For You As You Are

Jesus died so that relationship could be restored. He paid the price to free you from sin and shame to restore the relationship He wants to have with you (1 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:13). Even though we could never be worthy, his death and the shedding of his blood purifies us, making it possible for His Spirit to dwell within us! Relationship is restored! We can then begin the process of being transformed to be more like Him. Whether you believe it yet or not, you don't have to earn it (Eph 2:8-10). You can't be good enough to deserve it. It's His gift to you. It's there for the taking.

You Belong To Him Because He Wants You

God wants you to know that you are His and He wants to be the one to take care of you. He wants to take care of your worries, hurts, habits, and shame.

Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Psalms 100:3

You don't have to wait until you get to a better place to start a relationship with Him. It would be impossible for you to fix yourself to the point where you would be worthy of a relationship with God (He's that perfect and you are that flawed). If it were possible, you wouldn't need God. He wants to save you. He doesn't need you to try and do it for Him.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

There was a time where God dwelt in a temple made by man. It was a dwelling place that wasn't available to anyone but a high priest, who entered once a year to represent the people and represent God to the people. But this was only temporary, because God desires to do more than dwell in a building. It was His plan to dwell in each of us.

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV

Belong | You belong Here At FAC

It's God's desire to have a relationship with you , but His plan also includes fellowship within the body of Christ.

You belong here at FAC

We are all sinners saved by grace (Rom 3:23). We are all fallen, but worth saving (Rom 3:10-12). We are linked by our fallen nature and by God's love which He gives equally to all. The only thing that separates us is our belief in His love for us and our acceptance that we need Him and each other.

This is a body of believers who are a work in progress. (1 John 3:2)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28 NKJV

Belonging before Belief

Believing can be a process. You are invited to connect to our family, wherever you are in your life and your belief. God died for you as you are, so we don't judge you because of where you're currently at. However, we believe that while Jesus loves you as you are, you can't remain the same once you've been in His presence (Luke 19:1-10).

Where you're at is not as important as where you're going.

31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Luke 22:31-32 NKJV

We Need Each Other

You were not created to do life alone. Taking your place in the family of God allows you to connect with others who are on the same journey as you. We may be at different places, but no one has arrived. What's more is you are a vital piece to the puzzle. The body of Christ is made up of many members and everyone plays a part (1 Cor 12:13-20). One of the earliest characteristics of the Church was the way they gathered together and worked together to take care of each other's needs (Act 2:42-47).

You need people. People need you.

There is an epidemic of loneliness in our country. Depression and anxiety are at an all time high. Spiritually speaking, shame drives us to isolation. The antidote is fellowship. Relationships. We don't just seek to gather, but to connect. There are friendships waiting. There are mentors that you haven't met yet. You need God in your life, but you also need the people He puts around you (Matt 22:37-40).

Belong | How to Connect

Belonging is experienced through connection. God loved you so much that he died to restore the connection with you that was lost due to sin (John 3:16, 1 Peter 3:18). Now we can have relationship with Him anytime and anywhere. We experience Him through prayer, knowledge of His Word, and fellowship with His Spirit. You can experience this fellowship anywhere – by yourself or as you connect with other believers in our weekly worship services and small groups.

Small Groups

Small groups are one of the best ways to connect to the body of believers at FAC. When you join a group, you are joining with people of different ages, experiences, and levels of spiritual maturity. The relationships that are developed in these groups create an atmosphere where the body can minister to itself. While it may be intimidating to get to know everyone in a weekend worship service, you can begin to build quality relationships in a small group. We encourage you to be yourself. We all share one thing in common - we need God and without Him, our lives are a mess.

Community Groups

Community groups are small groups that happen in the community. FAC has some members that live in communities that are outside the Nashville metro area. Community groups allow those members to connect with people in their community. These groups are easier for them to get to after work during the week, but also provide an opportunity for them to reach neighbors or co-workers in those communities.

Interest Groups

We do more than worship together during our weekend services. We want to do life together. Interest groups help to create opportunities for people to join together and do the things that interest them. These connections are an important way that we build relationships and draw strength from one another. You're already doing things that interest you. Find someone with the same interests and do it together!

The Brotherhood

It takes strong men to be good leaders in their family. Whether you're a man who is leading a family, a single man, a widower, or a young adult, there is a place for you in the Brotherhood. The brothers of the FAC family look out for one another. There is always someone who can encourage you and always someone to be encouraged by you. We strengthen these relationships through activities, prayer, and service within the community.

The Sisterhood

Men and women are different, but just like men, women need each other. The Sisterhood is the place where wives, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, widows, and single mom's can find community. You are not alone and there are relationships to be had that will sustain you through all of life's struggles. We strengthen these relationships through activities, prayer, and service within the community.

A church is only as strong as its families. FAC seeks to minister to the whole family. For those looking to connect with us, there is something for every age group of the family.

PHK Ministries, etc.

There is a place for the littles at FAC! They are as important as any other group. Our goal is not to entertain, but to inspire them and bring the Word of God to life in their minds and hearts. We do this through Power Hour, a kids' service that takes place on Sundays, and by special kids classes on Wednesday nights.

Rise Student Ministries

The teenage years are filled with uncertainty. This is a critical development time where love, patience, and guidance are crucial. The search for identity can put students on a risky path, but providing them with a safe place to nurture their identity in Christ through devotion, teaching, and God centered relationships can be the difference between death and Godly life.

Young Adult Ministry (YA Life??)

Young adults are trying to figure a lot of things out. They're in transition from the predictability of high school to the challenge of becoming an adult. For this period of their life, they're not really either. It's at this moment that many leave the church and a relationship with God because the framework and influences that kept them there before are now gone. But with loving guidance and support from other YA's, this period of life can be a rebirth of relationship with God where knowledge becomes belief.

We want you to know that you belong. We want to connect you with who we are and where we're going. But you can't talk about where you're going without knowing where you came from.

Where We Came From

Our church had its beginning in 1940. Our early founders were DJ Gulley, George Boaz, Thomas Robertson and their families. These men met with Bro. Baggett and asked him if he would consider becoming their pastor. He agreed and they quickly began a building program. They purchased a lot on the corner of Third Ave South and Cameron Street in the South Nashville area. They had church in a tent until a building was erected. When the building was completed, they officially became known as "Jesus Only Tabernacle." In that building, the Lord moved marvelously and many souls were saved. We worshiped at that site until 1961. During that time we had several pastors: Pastor James H. Thornton, Pastor Warren Larry, Pastor Tommy Cypert. In 1958, Brother Billy D. Shoulders became the pastor.

By 1961, we had outgrown that building on 3rd and Cameron. The church then purchased a basement church on West Trinity Lane. We changed the name to First Pentecostal Church of Bordeaux. Once this building was no longer adequate, we were faced with the decision to either build on top of the basement church or relocate and build a new building. The site chosen for this new building was on the corner of Broadmoor and Maplewood Lane in North East Nashville. We moved into this building in December 1969. The decision was made to rename this new building First Apostolic Church.

We have now been at this same location for over 50 years. In 2001, under the direction of Pastor Billy Shoulders, the Family Life Center was erected. The building hosts a basketball, volleyball court, multiple classrooms, kitchen and office space.

In November 2004, the next phase of leadership began when Pastor Billy Shoulders became Bishop and his son, DJ Shoulders became Senior Pastor of First Apostolic Church. Bishop Shoulders served as Pastor for over 45 years. The transition of pastoring was seamless and the body of Christ continued to grow. Revival continued to stir and souls were being saved.

The church quickly outgrew the original church building built on the property. A building program began in 2007. While the new sanctuary was being erected, church services were held in the Family Life Center. In 2009, the new sanctuary was completed and it hosts our current services. We have been able to modify our current buildings to accommodate the growth. The campus now provides a youth sanctuary, nursery, conference rooms, along with the original Family Life center and new sanctuary.

We have seen great outpourings of God's Spirit through these years and have seen many of our dear brothers and sisters who were laborers and pioneers of this assembly go on to meet their rewards. First Apostolic Church continues to carry on its vision to be a place where people of all walks of life can BELONG, BELIEVE, and BECOME what God makes them to be.

Believe

Believe you Belong (God & FAC)

Believing is so easy a child can do it. However, as we grow up, believing is harder because we have a lot more information to consider. God asks that we put all of our analysis, experience, and opinions aside and take a step of faith – like a child. God’s ways are different from our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). This makes belief hard sometimes, because it requires that we trust in something that doesn’t make sense to us. Just like those trust falls you did in school, God is asking that you trust Him enough to take that next step!

The Gospel

The word “gospel” simply means “good news”. The gospel is simple, even though sometimes we complicate it. The good news is that even though we deserve to die for our sins, God loved us enough to die in our place. But he didn’t stay there. He conquered death and the grave and rose again. Even better than that, He now wants to dwell within you by giving you the gift of His Spirit. Sounds good, right? All that’s required to begin this relationship is the willingness to believe that Jesus loves you that much. Let’s start at the beginning.

Believe who God is

God was, is, and will be...forever. He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1) and his name is Jesus, Emanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:21-24, Luke 1:31)! In the beginning, it was just Him (John 1:1). The entire bible is the story of a God who created a people to be in relationship with. When Adam and Eve broke that relationship by choosing to go their own way (Genesis 3), God’s plan of redemption was immediately put into action. God is perfection, and He came as a man born of a woman to become the sacrifice to ultimately break the power of sin and shame that would keep us separate from Him (Acts 2:14-37). What once required the blood of an animal and was only available to a high priest is now made available to those of us who apply this same spiritual blood to our life. God is all powerful. As creator of everything, He needs nothing—but He desires YOU! Every religion worships a god, sometimes manifested as many gods. What separates Jesus Christ from all other gods is that His love was freely given by Him. Instead of becoming a person worthy of love or blessing, God loved you first and promises to transform you as you walk with Him!

Are you willing to believe that you were created by God?

Are you willing to believe that God really LOVES YOU?

Believe who you are

Like it or not, you're flawed. In the eyes of a perfect God, even our best attempt at perfection is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Perfection is impossible for us on our own. The problem is that we have the tendency to believe that if we try hard enough, we can fix ourselves. Paul wrote about a culture who decided that they really didn't need God and could define what perfection looks like. (Romans 1:18-32). He allowed the people to continue trying to be their own god. But that didn't work then and it doesn't now. Many believe attending church and being a good person is enough. Paul addressed this as well (Romans, 2:1-29). Paul sums it up by saying it doesn't matter whether you are the worst sinner imaginable or the most devout Christian born into a Christian family, you are a sinner in need of the redemption of an almighty God (Romans 3:9-20).

Are you willing to believe that you are a sinner in need of God's grace?

Believe what He did

When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the serpent to crawl on his belly forever. He also said that his seed would bruise the heel of Eve's seed, but her seed would crush His head (Genesis 3:14-15). This was prophetic. The bible carefully maps the family tree of Jesus, proving that He was the seed of Eve. Not only that, but while his body was bruised on the cross, His sacrifice crushed the power of Satan and redeemed us from our sin to again dwell in relationship with Him.

But here's the problem: God can't have relationship where there is sin. His perfection would be spoiled. But that didn't work for God. He created you to be WITH you. We can't fix ourselves, so He suffered the torture of the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, buying our freedom with his death (1 Peter 3:18). Now, we can have relationship with God. Not because of our own efforts, but because of what He did (Ephesians 2:13).

Are you willing to believe that Jesus was crucified to die in your place so that He could have a relationship with you?

Believe that we are justified by God's grace

We have been justified by God's Grace (Romans 3:21-26). It would be like you committing murder and standing before a judge. Right before the judge hands down a guilty verdict and sentences you to death (which you deserve), Jesus steps in and says, "I'll take that punishment. Sentence me instead." The judge would then look at you and say, "OK, you are now innocent and free to go. Jesus is going to die in your place."

Jesus did that! He loves you so much that He gave his life in your place. All you have to do to start the process is believe (John 3:16). He'll do the rest. If you confess your belief with your mouth, He will justify you (Romans 10:9). This is no small step. Many say the words, but their life never changes. Truly believing that Jesus died for you produces real love. That love will produce real change in you. If we say that we love God, but we continue to serve ourselves and live fulfilling our own desires, we are not truly in love with Him yet (John 14:15).

Are you willing to believe that our belief in Jesus's death and resurrection makes our spirit right with Him, producing real love that will produce real change?

Our Response to the Gospel

Belief in the gospel is the beginning. Peter presented the gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). He explained to them that the man who they had crucified was their Messiah. God dwelling among them as a man, Jesus Christ. Even though they didn't believe in Him, He still died for them, releasing them from the power of their sins. After Peter explained this to them, they felt deep remorse in their hearts. They believed Peter's words. Then they immediately responded, WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW? Peter then told them how they should respond.

*Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
Acts 2:38*

Believe in repentance

To repent means to "turn". It is more than saying you're sorry. It's your acknowledgement that you are a sinner and you can never fix yourself. It's your acknowledgement that you believe that Jesus Christ is your only redeemer and you are ready to turn your life over to Him and accept his gift of Grace (1 John 1:9).

Imagine if you fell off a cruise ship and landed right in the middle of a rocky ocean—oh, and you can't swim. The ship has sailed on without you. You are on your own and your head is slipping under the surface. You thrash around trying to swim, but it's not working. You're sinking. But then all of a sudden there is a life preserver thrown out to you. What do you do? Do you keep trying to save yourself with your thrashing or do you admit that you can't do it and grab the life preserver?

Repentance is admitting that you're lost without help. No amount of thrashing will help. You are willing to trust that the lifeline that was thrown to you is your only hope.

Repentance is not a one time event. It's a lifestyle. We will often try to let go of that life line and try our hand at swimming, but the result is always the same. Luckily, that lifeline remains in place.

Are you willing to believe that you must live a life of repentance, accepting that you can't make it without God's help?

Believe in Baptism

Baptism means to be "immersed" in water. It is a public acknowledgement that you have decided to make God your savior and redeemer and that his blood has washed away your sins. Peter told the people that they needed to be baptized, because that was the way that the people demonstrated becoming ceremonially cleansed. It wasn't about literally becoming clean, but representing that their sins had been washed away.

Jesus Himself was baptized by John the Baptist, even though He didn't have any sins to be cleansed (Matthew 3:13-17).

Baptism is an act of faith declaring that we are being made clean by Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross. When Peter presented the Gospel to a Jewish man named Aquila, he believed AND was baptized (Acts 18:2, 8).

Peter said to be baptized in Jesus Name. While there are many religious rituals and words surrounding baptism as an act, it's important to know that it was Jesus who paid the price for our sins and Jesus who we are declaring to be our Savior.

Many believe that baptism is not essential since it is symbolic. The bible is clear through many accounts of believers being baptized as well other instructional passages that baptism is an essential act of faith. We are saved by the washing of water and the word (Ephesians 5:26). Jesus himself told Nicodemus that he must be born again by the water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

Baptism represents a marriage. While many are forgoing marriage, believing the ceremony not to be important, marriage represents a commitment of love between a husband and a wife. The bible calls us the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-32). Baptism is the public declaration that we are joining ourselves to God and taking on His Name in our lives.

Baptism represents death and burial. When we turn our lives over to Christ through repentance, the old us is put to death. When someone dies, they are buried. We are buried through baptism, allowing God to make us a new creation. Our hearts have been cleansed and we are now under God's saving grace. Through repentance and baptism, God's Spirit will find a home in our hearts.

Are you willing to believe that you need to be baptized in the Name of Jesus, representing the cleansing of your sins and the burial of the old you?

Believe that the Holy Spirit is a Gift

Peter told the people in Acts 2 that they must repent of their sins and be baptized. He said they would then receive the GIFT of the Holy Spirit. This is the gift—that Jesus made it possible for us to become pure enough for Him to live inside of us. We can now have fellowship with Jesus through his Spirit. In other words, Jesus is with you always and through relationship with Him, you are transformed to be more like Him.

The Gift of God's Holy Spirit has been made free to us because Jesus paid for it. But in order to receive it you must be ready to turn your life over to Him completely (repentance). The truth is that God's Spirit can't dwell in a heart that hasn't been made clean. Remember that we're made clean through repentance and baptism. Many have difficulty becoming fully repentant (or completely submitted) to God. They're still trying to swim on their own. Maybe they feel that God expects them to at least swim a little on their own before they are given the gift He has for them.

The Holy Spirit comes with signs. These signs are not just for us, but for those around us. In Acts 2, God's Spirit gave the people in the upper room the ability to speak in other languages. This was a sign to them that His Spirit was being poured out in a new way. There were many people from other areas outside the building who spoke many different languages. These people heard the people in the upper room glorifying God in their own languages.

The ability to speak in other languages comes from God's Spirit manifesting itself in us (Acts 2:4). It is not something we control, but is actually something that God chooses to do in us as we give up control to Him.

There are many other signs of the Holy Spirit in our lives, beyond speaking in tongues. God's Spirit produces love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-24). You will feel these things growing in you and the people around you will notice the new you. There are special giftings of the Spirit that allow us to do great things to minister to other people (1 Corinthians 12).

The most important thing about God's Spirit dwelling in you is that it transforms you day by day to become more like Jesus Christ. Without His Spirit in our lives, we would remain unchanged and never be able to honor the commitments we made to Him through repentance. God wants you to have His Spirit so He can be with you not just on earth, but in heaven for all eternity!

**Are you willing to believe that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is a GIFT?
Are you willing to believe that without His Spirit in your life, you can't live the life
God has for you?**

Believe that sanctification is a process

When you believe in Jesus (I mean REALLY believe) to the point where you're ready to leave the old you and all your efforts to save yourself behind and make Him your savior, you are justified (Romans 3:21-26). Again, this means that you are instantly made right with God (just as if you never sinned). But it doesn't end there. In fact, this is the beginning. It's a rebirth, and like any baby who is born, the next step is to grow. This growth, unfortunately, is not instantaneous. It's a process. This process is called sanctification.

While our spirits are made right with God and we feel the weight of sin lifted from our lives in a moment, our thoughts, emotions, will and bodies may take longer to be changed. Most of the New Testament is devoted to this process.

Justification can't be achieved by human effort (Ephesians 2:8) and sanctification is no different. Sanctification will only progress in your life as you live in repentance and total reliance and submission to God. Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit so that we don't fulfill the evil desires of our flesh (Galatians 5:16). The Word of God will convict you of the parts of your life that need to change, but we have to allow God's Spirit to transform us from the heart out to make those changes stick. The good news is that as you have relationship with Jesus and fellowship with His Spirit, HE CHANGES YOU!

**Are you willing to believe that God's Spirit will transform you into a new creation
and He can change you from the heart out?**

Believe that you need Fellowship

The birth of the church in Acts 2 was characterized by their fellowship with God, their fellowship with each other, and their care for one another in community. As God's love transforms us to be more like Him, our focus shifts from ourselves to others. As you join this body of believers, you're joining a community of believers who look to support one another. As we grow, we need the support of the body of Christ around us. Jesus himself gave us people in our lives to help perfect us (Ephesians 4:11-13). Who you surround yourself with and which voices you allow in your life will either make you or break you. Fellowship requires humility, and in that humility we allow ourselves to be supported and we believe that God will equip us to be the support others need. By God's grace, we walk arm in arm, day by day.

Are you willing to believe that God never meant for you to do life on your own?

Become

There's just something about a baby. The birthing process is a difficult and complicated process, but once that baby gets handed to the tired mom, the connection is instant. There is a bond of love that makes all the pain and discomfort worth it.

But that is just day one. There will be dirty diapers, sleep deprivation, many questions, and tantrums to follow. While the parent's patience and endurance are tested, love will prevail. If you are a parent, you know. You can experience exasperation at your child's behavior while at the same time being overcome with the love you feel for them.

Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him (Matthew 7:11)? Jesus was speaking here of the love that He has for us. We love our children even though they aren't perfect. We love them through their growth and development and we are excited to see what they will become. We love with an earthly love that is conditional and transactional. We love based on the return. Even still we are able to overlook a lot when it comes to our children.

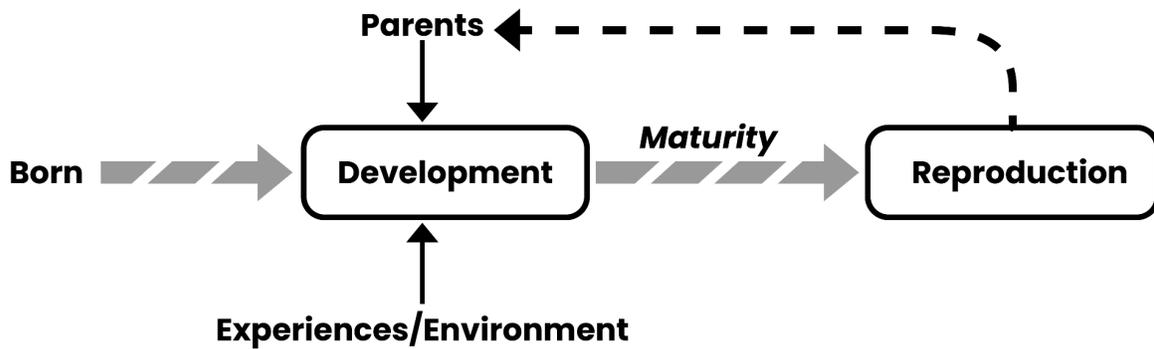
But God's love is perfect. In fact, He IS love (John 11:35). His love is not affected by our failures. It's not changed when we fail to meet expectations. The truth is that He died for us while we were still sinners. That means that our efforts at becoming better people or more perfect weren't factored into His love for us. He loved us and died for us to redeem us back to Him.

But that is just day one.

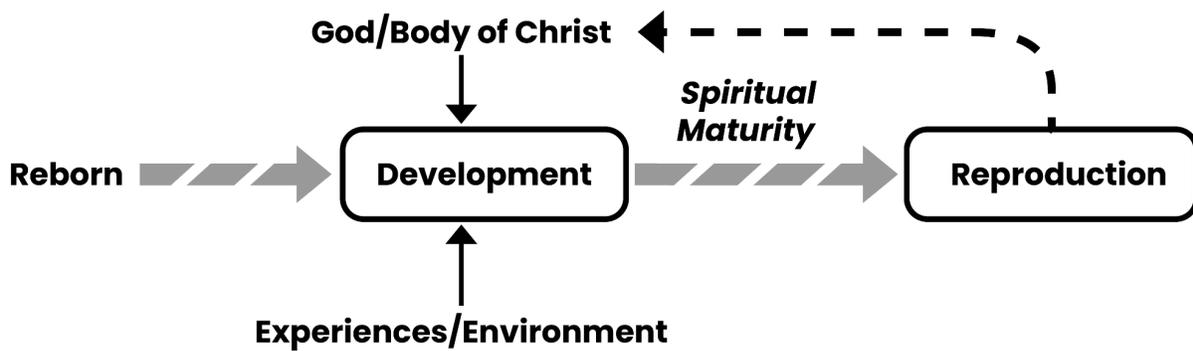
While our spirits are made right with God and we feel the weight of sin lifted from our lives in a moment, our thoughts, emotions, will and bodies may take longer to be changed. Most of the New Testament is devoted to this process.

Natural development begins at birth. A person develops through the influence of their parents as well as the sum of their experiences and the environment around them. The natural course as a person matures is to eventually reach a state where they are ready to become responsible for the maturity of others. Our spiritual development follows the same path. We are reborn (justified) and began the process of spiritual maturity as we are transformed by God's Spirit and disciplined through others in the faith. We also learn as we go through different experiences, both good and bad (James 1:2-4). Just as in the natural, it's God's plan that disciples make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20).

Natural Development



Spiritual Development



The good news is that as you have relationship with Jesus and fellowship with His Spirit, HE makes you what you need to be!

Whether you just began your walk with God today or you've been walking with Him your entire life, we are all linked by one common goal—becoming more like Christ. While it doesn't always feel like it, we're all on an even playing field. What we all have in common is that we're all hopelessly flawed (Romans 3:10-12). What separates us is how much we have learned to submit ourselves to Jesus. It is through knowing God through fellowship with His Spirit (2 Peter 1:3) that lives in us that we BECOME more like Him. As he transforms us (Romans 12:12), the old us becomes weaker and weaker while the new us takes the lead in our life. This process of growth through submission is called Sanctification.

Sanctification

Sanctification is the process in which we become more like Christ. Specifically, our soul (thoughts, emotions, will) and our bodies (cravings, fleshly desires) are brought into submission to choose the things of God over our own desires and worldly influences. This process is full of ups and downs, and while in theory it is simple, it can be a difficult process. It is vital that you see yourself throughout as a child of God who is under his grace. God loves you as his own child and He is patient with you throughout this process. Your righteousness comes from Him. That means you have to become willing to depend on Him for the things about yourself that you can't fix. It's human nature to feel that we must fix ourselves, but this is actually worldly thinking. If you could fix yourself, you wouldn't need God. If you believe you can do what only God can do, you are actually exalting yourself above God.

There are 3 areas to focus on in this journey of sanctification.

Become FREE from habits, hurts, wrong thinking

No matter your background, it is normal to have to work through some things in order to grow properly in Christ. You can be justified in Christ, but still have some lingering habits, hurts, or wronging thinking. Coming to Christ often brings complete deliverance from some of these, but other times, God chooses to let us work through things in a way that will better shape who we become in Him.

We become free from these things by faith, first believing that His Holy Spirit transforms us and we become a new creation. We are not cursed, but we have been made free by His Spirit. Our faith is increased as our knowledge of Him and His Word increases. We are destroyed by our lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). While God fights our battles and transforms us, there is a fight that we might take part in, but we have to learn how to fight and overcome the Bible way. Our strength and ability to fight is also increased through unity in the body of Christ. The body needs all of its parts. Likewise, we need each other. We weren't made to do life alone. Sin and shame cause us to isolate ourselves and pride tells us we need to fight battles on our own. However, these are lies that produce endless loops of failure and shame.

Become RIGHTEOUS

Part of sanctification is separation. God is not calling you to move into a shack in the middle of nowhere to live like a hermit. God actually calls us not to separate ourselves from the world, but instead separate ourselves from worldly thinking, influences, or priorities.

Becoming righteous depends on our total submission to Christ. We call this living in spiritual order. We are made up of three parts: our spirit, soul (thoughts, emotions, will) and our flesh. Our flesh must be submitted to our soul and our soul must be led by our spirit, which is submitted to God's Spirit.

A good example of spiritual order can be seen in the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul describes it in Galatians 5.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

Think about your life. Are you living a life where joy, peace, longsuffering (or patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (or discipline) are manifested? When God's Spirit is leading your spirit, which is leading your soul and flesh, these fruits are produced by Him. They are not based on how your body feels (tired, sick, hungry, etc) or on your emotions (worried, scared, sad, happy, etc) or what thoughts are going through your head. Instead, His Spirit will produce these fruits REGARDLESS of how you feel and what's going on around you. In this way, we are different than those who are not led by God's Spirit and depend on their feelings and surroundings to control their thoughts, emotions, and physical characteristics.

Become Kingdom Minded

To sum up what it means to be kingdom minded is to become concerned with others over yourself. It's about selflessness. All throughout the gospel accounts of Jesus's teachings and actions, you will find that Jesus constantly put others over himself. As we mature and become more like Him, we should adopt this same posture.

It's important to understand that just as a child is naturally selfish, selflessness is a product of maturity. A child is selfish out of necessity. They need their parents to focus on their needs because they are unable to take care of themselves. HOWEVER, as they mature and grow in their ability, it becomes normal for them to look beyond themselves. Eventually, the loop is completed as the child becomes a parent. It is the same for us in our spiritual lives. The difference is that this trait is not time dependent. Being in the presence of God immediately begins the process of loving others. There will always be more growth in this area that will take you deeper and deeper into serving in the Kingdom of God. If you study the disciples, they went from gathering food to feed Jesus' followers to giving their lives in order to spread the gospel to places yet to hear it.

You will face opposition

A lot of the opposition you will face in your walk with God will come from your flesh and soul not being submitted to God. But you must believe that there is a spiritual enemy that is out to get you. Satan has been defeated (Revelation 12:7-9), but his goal is to take as many down with him as he can. However, we must understand Satan's power and how he works. Satan does not have any power over you that you do not give him. He can't control you unless you give him control. He can't make you do things. Instead, he uses lies that target the evil desires residing in your flesh as fallen man. He makes the suggestion, you choose to believe it, and then you take action on it. Where Satan loves to work is after we commit sin. He again begins to whisper lies about how God sees you in that moment. He stokes the fires of your own shame and convinces you that you need to hide away from God. Since we are prone to do this all by ourselves, he doesn't have to work very hard. Understanding the truth of how God loves you even in the midst of your failure will overcome these lies.

We must also prepare ourselves daily to stand against these spiritual attacks from the enemy by putting on the Armor of God (Ephesians 6:11-18). God will never force himself on us and will only do what we allow. God fights our battle, but our part is in our choices to stand against the enemy (not believe his lies) and allow God to fight for us.

You were created for a purpose

We are First Apostolic Church. The word "apostolic" means "sent". Jesus chose his followers, taught them for 3 years and then sent them out. Jesus' last words to his followers before ascending into heaven were:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. Matthew 23:19-20

Shortly after this, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and power to make them witnesses, taking the gospel Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to all of the world (Acts 1:8). They performed miraculous signs and wonders, started churches, and taught the people how to live as Christians. Jesus sent them out to accomplish their purpose. Likewise, we have been saved for a purpose. We are all called together to spread the gospel, disciple (or teach) others His ways, and to care for one another, especially those who can't care for themselves.

But each of us will have a unique specific calling that will be made up of your specific gifts and experiences. God wants to use every part of your life to further His Kingdom. As you continue to grow in your relationship with Christ, you will fulfill the purpose that He has specially designed for you.

What areas of your life do you not feel free?

Resist the temptation to say that you are fine if you aren't. We are all a work in process. We need each other. Pride will make you feel like you won't be accepted with weakness in your life. This will trap you in an endless loop of trying to fix yourself in secret so that you can present yourself to others as free. If you live this way, your relationship with Jesus will consist of constant asking God to forgive you for the same things over and over again. It's hard to see God as anything but disappointed in you when you live this life. God wants you to see His love and live in His freedom. The first step to walking in that is being willing to give up everything that you're trying to maintain in secret and let Him in! We want to grow with you!

What are some things that you need to separate yourself from in your life?

Submission to Christ can be a difficult thing, but it's almost impossible to do if you try to have one foot in your new life with Christ and one foot in life He's calling you to leave behind. Whether it's relationships, places, or activities, nothing is worth holding onto if means settling for a life full of unfulfilling struggle.

Do you feel God calling you to any specific areas of serving in the Kingdom?

God has a place and a purpose for you in His Kingdom. Whether you feel a call to anything specific or being called to anything scares you to death, rest in the fact that God said that He would always be with us. He will not call you to something that he will not first equip you to do. He will also give you a heart and passion for the work. A good sign that you are developing in your spiritual maturity is your hunger to be used. Don't silence it or reason yourself out of it based on what you see in yourself. Remember, it's not you, but Christ in you!