

Dear Prospective Church Member,

Thank you for your interest in membership with Russell Chapel Baptist Church. We are excited that you are considering becoming a part of our faith family. We hope this information will prepare you for meaningful membership.

All individuals are welcomed who are seeking information regarding church membership and have met the following requirements:

- A personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
- Obedience in believers baptism by immersion
- Participation and completion of the New Members curriculum
- Meeting with Senior Pastor

Please contact myself, or the church office more information. I look forward to talking with you further about our journey in faith together.

In Christ,

Tim Crist
Senior Pastor, RCBC

Cell: 205-688-7791
Email: timcrist110@gmail.com

Russell Chapel Baptist Church

New Members Curriculum

This material is intended for new believers and/or individuals inquiring about church membership at Russell Chapel Baptist Church. The purpose of this curriculum is to fully educate potential members and/or new believers by outlining the importance of spiritual disciplines and accountability as we seek to faithfully follow the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- I. Spiritual Understanding
 - Fundamentals of the Gospel
 - Personal response

- II. Spiritual Purpose
 - The Great Commission

- III. Spiritual Growth
 - Importance of maturing in faith
 - Recommended disciplines for spiritual growth
 - Identifying and developing spiritual gifts

- IV. Church Support
 - Utilizing personal resources for God's Kingdom

- IV. Church Covenant
 - Commitment to follow Christ & His Word
 - Commitment to support the local Church

I. Spiritual Understanding

Fundamentals of the Gospel

God the Creator

God is holy and without flaw. There is none like Him. He is the just and gracious eternal Creator of all things. His knowledge, power and authority is superior and to be revered. All of creation is subject to Him and sustained by Him. The One and Only Living God is characterized by love, grace, mercy, wrath, and judgment.

"I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King." – Isaiah 43:15

"For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes." – Deuteronomy 10:17

"For this God is our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end." – Psalm 48:14

Sinfulness of Man

"The holy justice of God and the sinfulness of man create a tension for our Creator. Although He loves the world, He cannot condone sin. Yet, He cannot condemn those He loves. God requires payment for sin but wants to have a relationship with people. Christ came to build a bridge between humanity who is lost in sin and God who cannot tolerate sin. As fully God and fully man, Jesus came to redeem humanity. He lived in complete obedience to God's law and fulfilled the commands of the Father – a requirement that no one could meet. In His divinity, He was able to satisfy the wrath of God against sin as He provided Himself as the perfect sacrifice. In His death, He was a substitute on our behalf, and in His resurrection, a conquering Savior. He is the way of salvation, and His life and death were sufficient to bring redemption to a sinful people on behalf of a God who judges sin rightly and loves wholly." – Dr. David Platt

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" – Romans 3:23

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." – Romans 6:23

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." – Ephesians 2:1

Necessity of Christ

While we were yet sinners, God graciously sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins. Jesus Christ, having all deity and supreme authority of God, is the only source of salvation. Christ alone is able to cover sin, offering forgiveness and reconciliation with God through His death and resurrection. He alone satisfies the wrath of God for our sins.

"...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." – 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

"For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." - Colossians 1:19-20

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed." – 1 Peter 2:24

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." – Romans 5:8

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." – Romans 8:1

Personal Response

We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Grace refers to receiving an undeserved gift. We cannot earn salvation – it is a gift from God. When we put our trust and faith in Christ as our Savior and Lord, we receive the gift of salvation. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer and causes complete transformation – new life, new desires, and a newly restored relationship with God. When we follow Jesus in obedience, we choose to die to sin and self and live a new life in Him. Our eternal destiny is dependent upon our response to Jesus Christ.

After coming to a greater understanding of who God is, our sin problem and its consequences, the sacrifice and obedience of Jesus Christ, we are forced to make a personal response. There are only two options in response to this knowledge: follow Him as personal Lord and Savior, or complete rejection of Him, His Word, and His authority.

After responding to Christ in repentance and faith, we also have a responsibility to share our faith by profession of faith and baptism. Baptism (the Greek word “baptism” translates as “immersion”) is an outward symbol of an inward transformation. Profession of faith and baptism are ways to express joy and excitement of our new life in Christ.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” – Ephesians 2:8-10

II. Spiritual Purpose

The Great Commission

All Christians are sent forth by the Lord Jesus to proclaim His great name to all nations. The original Greek word “poreuomai” is translated as “go” which means to depart, or go forth. As Christ-followers “go forth” in obedience, we are instructed to make disciples along the way, regardless of the destination, or where we are in our journey. Every step of the Christian life should be in obedience to making disciples.

“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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19-20

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” – Mark 16:15

“He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are my witnesses of these things.” – Luke 24:46-48

“So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” – John 20:21

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8

Discipleship

Webster's dictionary defines a disciple as "one who embraces and assists in spreading the teachings of another." The word disciple(s) is found in approximately 250 Scripture references. Effective discipleship has two components: to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and multiply new disciples of Jesus Christ. The original Greek word "mathetes" means to be a learner, or disciple. The context of the language indicates that Christ-followers should be intentional to learn Scripture, live a lifestyle in accordance to the Scriptures, and teach others to do the same.

"And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." – Mark 1:17

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." – 1 Corinthians 11:1

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." – Philippians 4:9

"That's the whole point of being a disciple of Jesus: we imitate Him, carry on His ministry, and become like Him in the process." – Francis Chan

III. Spiritual Growth

Importance of Maturing in Faith

Your spiritual journey as a Christ-follower began with one simultaneous moment that included repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and a supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit. From that moment forward, our goal is to grow in faith and knowledge of God. We become more like Him as we seek more of Him in Word and prayer. Our fleshly desires begin to fade away as we grow in Christ-likeness. God desires and expects His children to grow spiritually in knowledge of Him and His Word. This type of growth brings about "spiritual fruit." The opposite of bearing fruits of God's Spirit are the works of the flesh.

Bearing "fruit" is the evidence of mature faith. As a disciple of Christ is being transformed into the likeness of his Master, he will begin to produce spiritual fruit. A Christian's life should be characterized by growing to become more and more like Him in action, speech, thoughts, and even motives. This type of submission demands total surrender to His will and ways. Let us put off our garments of pride and selfishness, and instead, be clothed in Christ, His righteousness, filled with compassion, love for the sinner, so that we can know, discern, and obey the will of God in our lives.

“Fruit-bearing” also includes evangelism and discipleship. A Christian should continually pray for opportunities to share the gospel and make disciples. Jesus’s plan for salvation to the world includes our faithfulness to intentional fellowship and teaching others His Word. The cycle of discipleship should not end with us. There is an entire world who needs to hear and believe the Gospel. Effective discipleship means making disciples who make disciples.

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” – John 3:30

“Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” – Matthew 3:8

“I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” – John 15:1-2

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” – Galatians 5:22-23

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which things I tell you beforehand, just as I told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” – Galatians 5:19-20

Recommended Disciplines For Spiritual Growth

Prayer

“One thing is crystal clear from Scripture: it is God’s will that we pray to Him. Sometimes we struggle to know the will of God in our lives. But there are some things that you do not have to struggle to know. One of them is that God’s will is that you pray to Him. The text says, “Devote yourselves to prayer.” God wills for you to pray to Him...God ordains prayer because He wants us to see Him as gloriously self-sufficient and ourselves as totally dependent upon Him.” – John Piper

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” – Colossians 4:2

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and repetition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” – Philippians 4:6-7

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Daily Bible reading and study

The Bible, or God's holy Word, was written for man so that we may be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to grow spiritually apart from God's Word. Prior to reading, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in discovering answers to the following questions: (1) What do the verses mean? (2) Why is this important?

Tips for reading and personal study:

- Be committed
- Be consistent
- Minimize distractions
- Read for transformation and application

"All Scripture is breathed by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." – 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Scripture Memorization

The Bible teaches that God's Word should always be close to the mouth and heart. One practical way of doing this is to memorize verses or entire passages of Scripture. Once we've internalized God's Word, it can easily be brought to memory and utilized for evangelism or encouraging others. It may seem difficult at first, and repetition helps it become more natural. We will never regret spending more time focusing intently on God's Word. Scripture memory and meditation will bring about many benefits in our Christian walk, including:

- Cleansing and renewal of the mind
- Keeps us from sin
- Provides insight and direction to real-life situations
- Strengthens our spirit
- Combats Satan's attacks on our mind and emotions
- Stimulates spiritual desires
- Fixes our heart and mind on eternal things
- Brings glory to God

"This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." – Joshua 1:8

"I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word." – Psalm 119:16

Fasting

Fasting is defined as the act of abstaining from food or drink. Spiritually speaking, fasting is a means of denying self of something desired for a specific period of time. The practice of fasting is found numerous times in the Bible in direct connection to a various circumstances. The Bible also gives instructions about the attitude and approach of fasting. It should be a means of humbling ourselves before God and seek forgiveness, comfort, help, guidance, strength and His will. Fasting allows us to draw near to God as we seek Him in place of food, drink, or other self-denial.

“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 in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” – Matthew 6:16-18

Spiritual Gifts

God wants His people to be actively involved in growing His Kingdom. He is so gracious that He freely gives spiritual gifts to all who follow Him. The spiritual gifts assessment is designed to help each person to identify his/her unique gift(s). The Bible instructs us to use our spiritual gifts in love and obedience, to bring glory to God and edification of His church. After identifying and recognizing Spiritual gifts, we must seek out opportunities to put these gifts to use.

“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them...” – Romans 12:6

“Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord...All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, and apports to each one individually as He wills.” – 1 Corinthians 12:4-5 & 11

IV. Church Support

Church attendance

As a follower of Christ, we now serve as a small part of the body of Christ. For this reason, it is important to remain in close fellowship, unity, and accountability with the body. In obedience to Christ's commands, it is vitally important for every Christ-follower to regularly attend a local church where the Word of God is preached. Church is not something that is done individually, it is something that is done collectively; as in, one body and one mind, with Jesus Christ serving as Shepherd. Engaging and serving in a local church allows for strengthening and growth of the entire church body.

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” – Hebrews 10:24-25

Utilizing Personal Resources for God’s Kingdom

“If Christ is not Lord over our money and possessions, then He is not our Lord..... There is a powerful relationship between our true spiritual condition and our attitude and actions concerning money and possessions.” – Randy Alcorn

“How different our standard is from Christ’s. We ask how much a man gives. Christ asks how much he keeps.” – Andrew Murray

As a Christ-follower, it is essential to the Kingdom of God that we utilize our time, talents, and tithes for His glory. In addition to spiritual gifts and church attendance, as previously discussed, all personal resources should also be voluntarily utilized for God’s mission. Because our citizenship is in Heaven, we must be intentional to invest in eternal destination. Wise people will look ahead to eternity, not just retirement. Through sacrificial giving of time, talents, and tithes, we demonstrate love and obedience to Christ and His Church.

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of Heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.” – Malachi 3:10

IV. Church Covenant

As a member of Russell Chapel Baptist Church, I agree to the following church covenant with one another by God's grace, for our good, and ultimately for God's glory.

We will draw near to God in worship and delight in His presence. We will grow in the knowledge of His Word and submit to its authority in our lives and in His church.

We will spur one another on to love and good deeds. We will meet with one another regularly, pray for one another, and serve one another selflessly. We will give cheerfully and generously to the support of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel in all nations.

We will submit to the leadership who has been entrusted by God to serve and care for this body by teaching the Word of God and modeling the character of Christ before us.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

By signing my name below, I agree to the above church covenant established by Russell Chapel Baptist Church.

Prospective Church Member

By signing my name below, I agree with the above church covenant, and hereby grant approval for continuing the process of church membership to the individual above.

Senior Pastor

Deacon Chair or Elder