

BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Fayetteville, NC 28314

Pastor Sean Harris

First Class – Week 1 – Our Mission

www.BBCFNC.ORG/FirstClass

Introduction to First Class

We'll begin by introducing ourselves and telling something about ourselves. Take your registration forms and pass them to the inside and to the back. If you have a background check, pass those in as well. Keep the seating chart so you can refer back to it so place it in your three-ring-binder. Fill in the blank one you find on your desk every week. Please sit somewhere different each week so you can't cheat week to week. Turn around and start talking to your neighbor. Get to know each other. Do not just copy one another's seating chart. Copying is busy work. We're not trying to do busy work; we're trying to get to know each other.

How many of you want to go to a church where nobody knows each other? Nobody wants to go to a church like that: "Hi, brother; Hi, sister" - Do you know what that really means? It means, "I don't have a clue who you are". So, we will be learning each other's names; we're going to get diligent about learning names.

The reason I teach first class is because I want to get to know you, and I want you to get to know your Pastor. I don't want you to think in terms of - "That's the guy I see once a week and he's hollering and spitting for forty-five minutes and that's it." - No. That's the preaching of God's Word, but I do have a lighter side and we'll get to that lighter side in First Class. We will hang out together, get questions answered and things like that.

Let's look at our three-ring-binders together. This is our Church Constitution right here. The **Church Constitution** has the **Church Covenant** and the **Articles of Faith** inside. You will need this for your homework. We will be looking at the Covenant beginning next week. You've got to study and learn the Covenant because this is what you are agreeing to or not agreeing to when you decide if you are going to become a member of this church. Then you'll see that we've got our weeks broken down as to what we're going to go over: Weeks One through Eight. Various Doctrines of the Church, what we believe and why we believe it; and we'll take it through there. If you open your binder, you'll see we have all the slides covered in first class. Then you'll see your **syllabus**. This is what you're going to need to finish in First Class. So as you knock out assignments, attend things, watch sermons, or do what's necessary to finish First Class, initial that you've done it and then your final document will be turned in at the end of First Class. Yes, you are going to have homework and it will take you about one hour each week. There are also articles that you need to read in First Class, and then there's the background check and the registration form that we've already filled out. Now I want you to find the homework. Every week you will have homework to do. This is what it looks like; this week's homework is **God's Plan of Salvation**. You will complete it, write your name on it and bring it to class next week. I have a membership secretary that collects all the homework. She will call you if you're missing an assignment and make sure you're keeping up and getting things turned in. Like I said, this will take you about an hour a week to do. Every week you'll come in and turn in your homework, we'll do a seating chart and introduce ourselves.

I know that was quick, so I want to pause and make sure no one has any questions about what we've covered so far. We will come to class, turn in our homework, do our seating chart, introduce ourselves, go over any questions and then get into the lesson. This book will be yours to keep and you will be receiving your homework back so you can put it in your book and have a permanent record of all you've done in this class.

The purpose of this class is for me to get to know you and for you to get to know me and the church. There is no question that is off limits in this class. You can ask anything about the church: what we believe; why we believe it. You can bring anything that is presented in here or in your homework to class and ask the question because if you have that question, someone else has does as well. **We want you to prayerfully seek the Lord's will concerning Church Membership. We don't want anyone joining the church on a flippant decision based on an emotional response on a single Sunday morning. Instead, we want you to think about it and pray about it. "Is this really the right church for us? Is this your will for us?"** So that is why we take our time.

Welcome to First Class

Welcome to First Class! We're looking at Week 1 – **Our Mission**. Why would it be important for a church to have a **Mission Statement**, and why would you want to know what that statement is?

Class Member - "We want to know what we're getting into."

Absolutely, you want to know what you're getting into. It would be crazy to join an organization and not know everything about that organization. We don't do that with anything else, but it seems as though church membership has really slipped; people are joining churches in a moment's notice without really knowing the church.

What about the **Vision Statement**? Why would that be important to you?

Class Member – "Knowing the road ahead."

Yes, the road ahead, very good; why does this church exist? Are all churches the same? - No. Are there quite a bit of differences? - Yes. So this is very important for us to get into.

The purpose of this church is established by its Mission Statement. Our Mission Statement answers the why, and states that ultimately our mission is to glorify God. Our Mission Statement comes from Matthew 28; so if we would all turn to Matthew 28. Would someone read verses 19-20; and our Mission Statement comes from Mark as well. Once you're there if someone would read it nice and loud so we can pick up your voice on the recording.

Matthew 28:19-20 - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Okay, so that's Matthew 28:19-20, could someone on the other side of the room read it please?

Matthew 28:19-20 – “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.”

Alright someone tell me the context of where we are with this: Who is speaking? – Jesus. Who’s He talking to? - His disciples and all of us. Yes, by extension, all of us. In the immediate context it’s His disciples. This is often called what? - **The Great Commission.**

So here is our **Purpose Statement:** “Proclaim Christ in the 21st Century in Fayetteville, Fort Bragg North Carolina and the world: to make fully functioning followers of Christ to the glory of God the Father.”

- Berean Baptist Church exists to - **Proclaim Christ in the 21st Century.**
- Where? - **In Fayetteville, Fort Bragg North Carolina and ultimately the world.**
- For what reason? - **To make fully functioning followers of Christ.**
- To what end? – **To the glory of God.**

Why do you think we say proclaim Christ as opposed to just say “proclaim God”?

Class Members: “Because some churches don’t believe Christ is the Son of God.” – Perhaps, yes, excellent. What else? “The works of Christ” – Very good.

What about the 21st Century; why do you think the **21st Century** is included in there?

Class Members: “It’s different; it’s the time we’re in.” – Exactly, we’re not locked into the 20th Century; we’re not locked into the 1900’s; we’re going to use the modern technology that’s available to us; we’re going to use the means that God has given us. We’re here to proclaim Christ in the year 2011, we’re not trying to live in the 1970’s or a particular era. We’re here in the 21st Century and we’re going to use everything that God has given us. That is why these sessions are recorded and uploaded onto the internet so that you can be absent and make up your work and follow along using the internet; we’re going to use the things that God has given to us.

What about this section right here: **Fully-functioning followers of Christ.** What’s that all about?

Class Member: “So that everyone can use their gifts as disciples.” - That’s right; I’ve heard comment from people that say, “All they seem to care about at that church is you getting saved.” I need to let you know that we’re doing our very best to help you grow as a Christian; that every message is going to challenge you to grow and move forward; that ‘I’m saved’ is wonderful and it’s glorious but it’s not enough.

Class Member: “It seems like the mentality of many people who join churches is ‘do I like that kind of music’ or ‘do I like the sermons’ and it’s all about what that person can get from the church. But church membership is supposed to be a group of people who are dedicated to serving God, as opposed to a particular style that they might like the best.” - Very good, I would agree with that.

In the Proclamation we said “**Proclaiming Christ**”; the proclamation is the beginning of the Gospel of Christ.

Mark 1:1 – “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

Mark 16:15 - “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel [or to proclaim the gospel] to every creature.”

You say, "I can't believe you're starting a church membership class with God's Plan of Salvation" and my retort would be "I can't believe you'd start anywhere else." I can't imagine any greater foundational truth to go over than that. So many believers today, some so-called Christians, have such an elementary understanding of the gospel. When you say to them "**how do you know you're saved?**" typically you'll hear answers like "well I asked Jesus into my heart, that's how I know I'm saved". I'm going to tell you right now, that's like having no clue how an engine functions in a car and yet you've been driving for 50 or 60 years. You just stick the key in the ignition and the car runs; you have no idea how the engine works, you're clueless. The difference is that you can go your entire life not knowing how an engine functions in a car and still drive. ***But the Gospel is the foundational truth to the entire Bible.*** To not know the Gospel is to not know the Bible, to not know the Gospel is to not know Christ. The truth is that you and I as believers should be so grounded in the Gospel that someone could wake us up at 3am, shake us and ask us "what is the Gospel" and we'd be ready to talk about the Gospel because we know it so well. To know the Gospel only as the five verses that I use in Romans for "Romans Road" is such an elementary understanding of the Gospel. When you do your homework this week and look at Bible verses, you want to ground yourself in them and submit yourself to them. Jesus said He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

So the question is, **why did man need to be saved?** - Because we're lost.

What does it mean to be lost? - Without Christ; without God.

What is it that made us lost? - Sin.

What is sin? - Rebellion against God's command; separation from God.

Make sure that you understand that this church believes that when you come out of your mother's womb you are a sinner, from birth. We do not believe that left to your own devices that if we could just isolate you in a wonderful box that you would be a great little person, or that it's only because you were born in a wicked world that you became a sinner.

We believe that man is born as a sinner: Foundational belief. Every humanist, secular philosopher, psychologist and psychiatrist would say you're basically good, but we would say no man is basically bad. If that offends you, then you are in the wrong church, because **we don't need a Savior if we're inherently good.** I am inherently a sinful person left to my own devices, I am wickedly sinful. That's the reality. My biggest problem is selfishness, I am inherently a selfish person, I want to do what I want do; I want to watch the shows that I want to watch; I don't want to clean up the dishes, I want someone else to clean up the dishes: That is a constant battle in my life, perhaps you too?

We believe that Adam and Eve disobeyed God. By the way, we believe that Adam and Eve are real people and NOT fictitious people beings created by the storyline. We believe that they had a perfect friendship with God. They walked and talked with God in a most amazing way, and their sin separated them from God. **We believe that sin is transgression of the law and that all have sinned and they all come short of the glory of God on a regular basis.** We believe that man is inherently dead, and there's nothing you can do to save yourself. We believe that, outside of the work of the Holy Spirit, you have no chance of being saved and you cannot wake up in the morning and say, "Today is the day I would like to be saved". If the Holy Spirit is not prompting,

convicting or working in your life, then you cannot be saved nor can anyone else be saved. **Salvation is not something that you can manipulate; it is a work of the Lord: This is the foundational belief.** We believe that based on **John 3:17**, a man must be born again that there should be decisive time when a person has been born again and that I can ask you, “When did that happen?”, and you don’t come back with “When I was baptized”, or “When I joined a church”, or “When I prayed a prayer” or “When I was saved”. When did you put your faith in Christ? When did you recognize yourself as a sinner separated from a holy and righteous God, on your way to hell, and the Holy Spirit gave you faith to believe the truth? You say, “Pastor, do I have to have an exact date and time?” No, you don’t. But most people know when they were converted and can remember a former life. We believe that the wrath of God abides on all those outside of Jesus Christ. Notice John 3:36.

John 3:36 - “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, he that not believeth on the Son hath not seen life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

I’ve got to tell you, this is a major separating point in many churches: That all you hear about is the love, the love, the love, the love, the love. And boy, I love the love of God. I’m crazy about the love of God. But do you know why I’m so crazy about the love of God? It’s because it’s the opposite of the wrath of God.

When do you most appreciate mercy? - When you deserve wrath.

How many of you have seen those blue lights in your rearview mirror like I have? If you haven’t already, it’s going to happen. My last experience was right in front of the Cliffdale Cleaners. I did an inappropriate lane change and the officer said, “Cowboy, what were you doing back there?” And do you know what I was praying for the whole time? - Mercy. Why? Because I knew if you saw my lane change, you knew it was me making a last minute decision; I didn’t want to go that way so I whipped right across there and it wasn’t safe, it was inappropriate and it was reckless. I just thought I was in charge, and I thought I could do it but he was right to pull me over and call my attention to my unsafe driving. I was sinful in that moment and transgressed against the laws of Fayetteville. What I should have gotten was a ticket. I should have gotten wrath and judgment, that’s all there is to it. I can try to play it off all I want, but the truth of the matter is, that is what I deserved. He said to me, “It looks like your driving record is clean.” I told him it would never happen again, and he said, “Well, don’t do it again” and I drove away without a ticket. That is when we most appreciate the love and mercy of God: when we recognize that He is wrathful against sin.

Here is the **Gospel call**: The Gospel call is the presentation of the person and work of Jesus Christ and God’s way of salvation. The Gospel call is an invitation to repent and believe the truth. The Gospel call is a promise of forgiveness and salvation to those who will repent and believe; those who will turn to God and put their trust in Jesus Christ. That is the Gospel call; the Gospel call is a verbal communication of information and a divine working of the Holy Spirit. Because what we have to realize is that God uses men and women to share truth. We have to realize that the Gospel is proclaimed - with words - to people; you can’t just live out the Gospel. The Gospel is a message to be communicated with words – HOWEVER, we have no ability to manipulate someone into salvation. If THIS (verbal communication) does not have THIS (Holy Spirit) accompanying it right here, then NO ONE is going to get saved. That is why we pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to come; we pray for God to fill that auditorium with His presence; we pray that sinners would be called to repentance. We pray that God will do the work because we realize that according to **Jonah 2:9, salvation is of the lord.**

Let's talk about *Repentance*. Jesus said in **Luke 13:5** *lest you repent you shall all likewise perish*. So repentance is turning to God. It is the awareness that we are coming out of the womb and immediately going further and further away from God. The awareness that I'm not actually going toward God by birth, **I'm going away from God and only until the Holy Spirit gets a hold of me and begins to convict me of my sin by the grace of God will I turn to God – That is repentance.**

Repentance may be defined as the conscious turning of the regenerate person away from sin and toward God, resulting in a complete change of lifestyle, revealing itself in a new way of thinking and willing.

How many of you can remember true repentance in your life?

Class Member – I was baptized and decided to put my faith in Christ at age 7 but I don't know if I didn't completely get it, but I really didn't have a historical build up in my adulthood that would indicate that I had repented. Once I started coming here, I feel like I got reprogrammed. It had kind of bothered me wondering if I was really saved or not before, but ultimately I realized that it started with Christ.

Class Member – Things that I used to do that I thought were ok and now my viewpoint has completely changed

Does anyone else have a short testimony where there was a change in your life?

Class Member - Prior to the age of 17, I'd gone to church all my life, but my heart was dark. God began to convict me of that and then on September 7, I accepted Christ. I was just amazed over the course of the next few months, at the changes I experienced. Things I used to think were okay were all of a sudden not okay at all. It was amazing how He was opening my eyes to seeing things in a new way. It wasn't all at once, but as I began to go through life, from that point forward, God began to show me a new perspective: His perspective, and began changing my desires and I didn't want to do those old things anymore.

How many can say, "Yeah, I can relate to that?"

So, we said repentance is turning toward God and faith in Jesus Christ according to Acts 20:21.

Acts 20:21 – "Believe on the Lord and thou shall be saved."

John 20:31 – "But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God that believing you might have life through His name."

1 John 5:1 – "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him."

So, faith is an intellectual ascent in known facts of the Person and Work of Christ, but it's much, much more than that. It is **TRUSTING IN** these facts; leaning on these facts; **RELYING ON** these facts.

Turn to Romans chapter 1 and let me show you the gospel as a promise. You might want to jot this down in a margin somewhere because it is critical for you to clearly see this.

Romans 1:1-2 – "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures."

I want you to notice from verse 2 what word? - **Promise! Promise!**

This is the biggest reason why you don't have to ask to be saved: you believe in a promise.

If I make a promise to my son, he doesn't ask me for the promise. I keep the promise. What does he have to do? He has to have faith in the promise.

The gospel is a promise. Promised by Whom? - God.

Who is the promise? - Jesus.

What is the promise? – Eternal Life - Forgiveness of sins - Reunion with God.

The over arching word is the gospel, the overall Person is Jesus, and the promise is whoever believes will have their sins forgiven and granted eternal life.

Do I have to ask for that? - No. It is a promise that God made to mankind through Jesus Christ.

So, ***conversion is the turning and trusting on Christ***. Conversion is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So a saved person...if you this morning are a saved person, there's been a time you've turned to God; there's been a time you've put your faith in Christ, and therefore you've been justified; you've been adopted into the family of God; set apart by God the Holy Spirit; and you will ultimately persevere in the faith to the point in which you receive a glorified body. This is God's Plan of Salvation: Those who repent and put their faith in Christ are converted, and upon conversion they are justified or declared righteous, adopted into the family of God, set apart, have a new mission, and a new life. They will persevere in the faith and ultimately God will give them a glorified body and bring them to Himself.

Let's talk about the role of the Holy Spirit in this whole process. Would someone please read Titus 3:5?

Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Regeneration...that's ***“new life”***, when we say somebody is regenerate, we mean they are ***converted***.

Let's pause for just a second and answer this question.

Why is it so important that the church have only regenerate people in their membership? Why would it be important for a church to guard its membership (not attendees, just membership) and ensure that only regenerate people are part of the membership? Why would that be so important?

Class Member - I think it's probably something similar to what my daughter was saying which is 'this person claims to be a Christian, wants me to come to her church and yet I see certain things going on and I don't want to be like that'.

Class Member – If you're not regenerate then you're not able to do His will.

Absolutely, the will of the Father is that we worship Him in spirit and in truth. It's impossible for you to worship God if you're not converted. Singing a song, sure...anyone can articulate words but that's not worship. Worship is when the Spirit of Christ inside you creates a love and adoration to glorify God and to communicate love and truth. So you're absolutely right. If the church is full of people who are unregenerate, then there is not true worship.

What else?

Class Member – We would not want somebody who is unregenerate to be a teacher because it would be hard to trust them.

That's right, that's why we have a membership class and that's why you're going to have to share your salvation testimony with a Pastor before you can become part of the church, because if you do not have a clear salvation testimony you cannot become part of the church. And by a salvation testimony, I do not mean "was there ever a time you asked Jesus into your heart". That is not a salvation testimony and it is not an acceptable understanding.

Class Member – As leaders of the church, you're also taking care of the people before they become a member by not being negligent to the fact that people could easily go under the radar if they intend to join the church and think they're saved but maybe they're not and don't realize it. It's an opportunity to catch those people rather than just accept that if they say they're saved, then they must be saved.

Very good, if we just welcome people to the church who say "I'm a church member, I've been baptized, I'm good to go" then how will that person ever be convicted?

Evidence of the new birth according to 2 Corinthians 5:17.

2 Corinthians 5:17 – "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Become new...becoming new....progressive. Is your life new? Is your life different? Are you becoming a new creature? If you were to compare you walk with the Lord from 2 years ago, is it any different or are you still in the same stagnant position? Or are you growing as a Christian, that's the challenge.

Justification is the just for the unjust, it's declared just before God according to **Romans 3:28** and **Romans 1:7**. You are adopted into the family of God, you're sanctified, set apart, being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

This means that God the Holy Spirit is trying to make you more like Jesus, the way you talk and the way you walk, and then ultimately glorification. Look at Romans 8:30 with me.

Romans 8:30 – "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

True believers persevere in the faith, they stay with the gospel and God grants them eternal life that can never be lost.

Here is the mission of the church: To make fully functioning followers of Christ, and here is a graphic representation of the way we're trying to impact you. We have 4 W's.

- Word
- Worship
- Work
- Witness

The Word of God is in your head. We want you to learn; we are going to intellectually challenge you so that you are growing in your knowledge of God.

But not just *head* knowledge; we want to get into your *heart*. We want you to love God more because of your time with us.

Ultimately this is supposed to result in two ideas.

- Work. You want to serve God. Intellectual change, knowledge growing, heart, makes "I have to do something; I'm not just here to fill a seat. I need to contribute to the body of Christ".
- Witness. Your feet represent your witness. Your feet represent the idea that "I'm going to carry the gospel with me wherever I go".

Again the 4 W's are: The WORD impacting your mind. Your heart being changed to WORSHIP God. The desire to WORK with your hands, using your gifts, talents and abilities for the glory of God. And ultimately we want you to be a WITNESS.

That's what you were talking about, this idea that the life we live as a witness is salt and light. Are there any questions with what we've covered today?

Class Member – Just to be sure, here at Berean, you believe that once a person is truly regenerate, that it is impossible that they would not mature.

That's exactly right. I get that from Philippians 1:6.

Philippians 1:6 – "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

He will perform that work - not me. He's performing it on me. Why? Because I've been adopted into His family; I have been converted; I have been sanctified; I have been set apart. The work NEVER stops. Now, is it a roller coaster ride? - Absolutely! Are there valleys? - Yes! Are there times where I'm not nearly as in love with God as other times? - Absolutely! But in the end, true believers will continue to persevere toward the final, ultimate objective: which is ***being called to be like Christ through glorification.***

Are there any other questions?

