



Communicant's Class Manual:

The Five PCA Membership Vows, The Story of Jesus, and How the Gospel Applies to Our Lives

(A Six Week Class)



Name:

Age and Grade:

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How to Use This Class Manual (2 Options):

- Option 1: Study by yourself then come to the weekly class with Pastor Dave
- Option 2: Study with a parent/guardian and then come to the weekly class with Pastor Dave

Who is Able to Go Through a Communicant's Class?

- This class is primarily for any student/young person in the 5th grade (10 years old) through the 12th grade (17 years old) who wishes to join Grace Presbyterian Church and be admitted to the Lord's Supper
 - o Although the Holy Spirit works in people whenever and however He pleases, and children mature in their walk with Christ according to a variety of factors, it is our belief that sometime between the ages of 10-12 that children are able to understand what it means to be a believer as well as the responsibilities that accompany a relationship with Jesus and His Church.
 - o The session does have the option to conduct an interview to allow younger children into the class. But, we would ask that this only be requested in rare/exceptional cases.

What Exactly Is A Communicant's Class?

- Instruction is necessary in order to understand what it means to be a communing member. In the PCA, this means making a public confession of faith, becoming a member of a local church, and being admitted by the elders to take communion, which is only for professing Christians (ie- a "COMMUNION-icant's class)
- This communicant's class itself should be a confirmation of where a child is in his/her relationship to Jesus and the Church. Upon completion, the child will have the opportunity to share his/her profession of faith with the church elders, who desire to diligently balance the need to hear of a child's profession with the tenderness necessary to communicate with children. Although the same type questions will be asked to children as are asked to adults (*for example: profession of faith; understanding of a need for a Savior; understanding of the elements in the Lord's Supper; understanding of the importance of the church and each person's responsibility to support it*), though they will be asked in an age appropriate manner.
- In short, a communicant's class:
 - o Prepares students to make a viable profession of faith
 - o Informs students of the requirements of church membership
 - o Informs students of the content of the 5 membership vows in the PCA
- Each student will be asked to write a short testimony of how they came to faith in Christ in preparation for their verbal interview with the elders at the end of the class. Students will also be asked to write a paragraph about why they would like to become a member of Grace Presbyterian Church.

Resources You Will Need:

- Your Bible, A Pen/Pencil, A Copy of *The Jesus Storybook Bible* by Sally Lloyd-Jones, and this manual
 - o A copy of *The Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms* would also be helpful, but it is not required

Class Schedule:

- Week 1: What is a Christian? Why Join A Church?
- Week 2: Membership Vow #1
- Week 3: Membership Vow #2
- Week 4: Membership Vow #3
- Week 5: Membership Vow #4
- Week 6: Membership Vow #5

Next steps after the class:

- Elder Interview (Give your profession of faith and why you want to join GPC)
- Elder vote to admit you into membership at GPC and the Lord's Supper
- Public taking of the membership vows before the church

Class #1: What is a Christian? Why Join a Church?

(**Pastor Dave will teach this class the first time we meet, you do NOT need to prepare beforehand**)

What is a Christian?

What defines someone as a “Christian”? Some say that a Christian is a good person; others say that you must go to church to be a Christian. So, if you are a good, loving person who goes to church, does that make you a Christian? In this section we will explore what it truly means to be a child of God.

1. Who is God?
2. What does it mean to be a Christian?
3. How does one become a Christian?

What Scripture tells us about our relationship with God:

Who is God?

- **He is Holy** – Isaiah 6:3 – “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of host; the whole earth is full of his glory!
- **He is Just** – Deuteronomy 32:4 – The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.
- **He is Love** – Psalm 145:8,9 – The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The LORD is good to all; and his mercy is over all that he has made.
- **He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, Omnipresent** (*See Psalm 33:13; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 66:1; Jeremiah 32:27*)

What Did God Do?

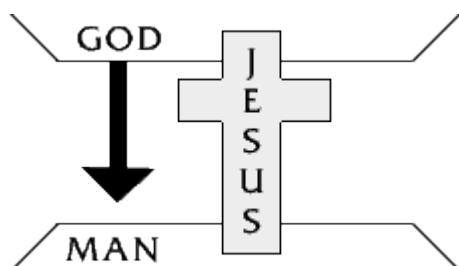
- **He is Creator** – Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Who is Man?

- We are made in God’s image, but that image has been tainted by the Fall. Thus, we are people both of dignity and depravity in the sight of God. (“God is holy, holy, holy and we are not, not, not”)
- **Dignity** – Genesis 1:27 – So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- **Depravity - Adam's Fall** (Genesis 3) **AND Our Fall** (Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12-21)

How Did God Fix the Fall?

- **Romans 5:12-17** – *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 – for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.*



How Do We Become Christians?

- **By Faith in Christ Alone** – Ephesians 2:8-9 – 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.
- **By Repentance** – Joel 2:12-13 – “Yet even now,” declares the LORD, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster.

Basics of Spiritual Growth “...but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” **II Peter 3:18**

- **Rely Entirely on Christ** *Romans 1:16-17 - I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*
- **Study the Bible Deeply** *2 Timothy 3:16-17 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
- **Pray Dependently** *1 John 5:14 - This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*
- **Fellowship Often** *Acts 2:42 - They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayers.*
- **Worship Passionately** *Hebrews 12:28-29 - Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*
- **Witness Faithfully** *Matthew 28:18-20 - And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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."*
- **Seek To Be More Like Christ** *Romans 12:1-2 – I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*
- **Be a Good Steward**
 - **Of Time** *Luke 12:36-38 - ...and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!*
 - **Of Talent** *Romans 12:4-8 - For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*
 - **Of Treasure** *2 Corinthians 9:6-8 - The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.*

Why Join A Church?

- **Jesus Loves the Church:** *Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*
- **God calls His people out of the world to Himself:** *Exodus 6:6-8 “Say therefore to the people of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.’ Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*

The People of God in the New Testament are Described in 3 Unique Ways:

- **Body:** *1 Corinthians 12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.*
- **Bride:** *Revelation 19:7-8 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure” –for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*
- **Building** *Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

The Benefits of Joining A Local Congregation

- **The Three Marks of the Church**
 - **Preaching of God’s Word** Christ leads by example: *Matthew 4:17 – From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 28:19-20 – 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.”*
 - **Proper Administration of the Sacraments** (*Fencing of the Table*) *1 Corinthians 11:27-29 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.*
 - **Proper Use of Church Discipline (Restoration and Reclamation)** *Hebrews 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. Matthew 18:15-17 – If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*
- **Fellowship**
 - **Prayerful Support and Accountability** *James 5:14-16 – Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
 - **Corporate Worship** *Revelation 7:9 – After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*

(Homework: Prepare the material for class #2 and come ready to talk about it)

Class #2: Membership Vow # 1. Do you acknowledge yourselves to be sinners in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope save in [*except for*] His sovereign mercy?

What this question describes: Your **PREDICAMENT** before a Holy God

Main Topics: Sin, Repentance

Storyline of the Bible: Creation and Fall

Biblical Texts: Genesis 1-3, James 1:13-15

Jesus Storybook Bible: pgs. 1-37

Key Worship Practices: Confession of Sin and Repentance

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

- **Question #14: What is sin?**
 - *Answer: Sin is any want [*lack] of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.*
- **Question #87: What is repentance unto life?**
 - *Answer: Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.*

Journal/Homework Questions:

Do you have any questions about this material and vow #1? (Write them down below)

Read James 1:13 – 15 & 4:1. What does this teach us/remind us about where bad behavior (i.e. sin) really comes from?

How have you seen your sin cause problems in your life? How does the sin of others cause problems in your life?

Think of a time when you were ‘disciplined’ by your parents. What was the desire of your heart that motivated you to misbehave? Did you deserve the discipline that your parents gave you?

Can you think of a good experience with apologizing—to parents or friends?

Why is it important for us to apologize [repent] to God when we sin? (1st John 1:5-10)

(Homework: Prepare the material for class #3 and come ready to talk about it)

Class #3: Membership Vow #2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

What this question describes: God's **PROVISION** for you

Main Topics: Savior, Faith, Salvation, Justification, Grace

Storyline of the Bible: Redemption

Biblical Texts: Genesis 3:15, 21; John 1:1–18; Romans 3:21–26, 5:6–11; Ephesians 2:1–9

Jesus Storybook Bible: pgs. 272–278, 286–317

Key Worship Practices: Centrality of Christ, Assurance of Pardon, Thankfulness

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

- Question #20: Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
 - o *A: God having, out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.*
- Question #21: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?
 - o *A: The only Redeemer of God's elect, is the Lord Jesus Christ,¹ who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continue[s] to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.*
- Question #30: How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?
 - o *A: The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.*
- Question #33: What is justification?
 - o *A: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for [*through] the righteousness of Christ imputed [*given] to us, and received by faith alone.*
- Question #86: What is faith in Jesus Christ?
 - o *A: Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.*

Journal/Homework Questions:

Do you have questions about this material and vow #2? (Write them down below)

Why do you think Jesus had to become a man? (Philippians 2:6–8)

Why was it so important for Jesus to perfectly obey His Father while He was on Earth? (Romans 5:18–19)

Why do you think Jesus had to die?

Why does it matter if Jesus rose from the dead? (1st Corinthians 15:12-19)

Why is it so important that we receive Jesus “by faith alone” apart from anything good we have done?

Why is it so important for us to admit that we cannot save ourselves?

What's something you can do every day to ‘practice’ receiving and resting in Jesus alone for your salvation and being able to live in God’s world?

(Homework: Prepare the material for class #4 and come ready to talk about it)

Class #4: Membership Vow #3: Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor [*try your best with God's help*] **to live as becomes** [*is expected of*] **the followers of Christ?**

What this question describes: God's **POWER** in your life

Main Topics: Sanctification, The Work of The Holy Spirit

Storyline of the Bible: Growing up in God's family, Being Made Like Jesus, Learning to Follow Jesus

Biblical Texts: John 14:15-16, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:20-32; Philippians 1:6 2:1-13; Romans 12

Jesus Storybook Bible: pgs. 100-107, 136-143, 170-175

Key Worship Practices: Call to Worship; Word and Sermon; Confession of Faith

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

- Question #1: What is the chief end of man?
 - o *A: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.*
- Question #3: What do the scriptures principally teach?
 - o *A: The scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.*
- Question #34: What is adoption?
 - o *A: Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.*
- Question #35: What is sanctification?
 - o *A: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man [*every part of our lives] after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.*
- Question #36: What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?
 - o *A: The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.*

Journal/Homework Questions:

Do you have questions about this material and vow #3? (Write them down below)

What are some ways we can “glorify God and enjoy Him forever?”

Do we have to work hard to be perfect before God will love us? Do we have to stay perfect to keep God's love?

What are some ways we can know that the Holy Spirit is at work in our hearts?

Why is it comforting to know that God is always at work in our lives?

What are 2-3 things that you would like God to help you with? (Ex: Being nicer to others, trusting God more, etc)

Why is it so important for us to be patient and forgiving with others when they make mistakes or hurt our feelings?

What are 2-3 things that you that you are thankful for right now? Why are these gifts from God?

(Homework: Prepare the material for class #5 and come ready to talk about it)

Class #5: Membership Vow # 4. Do you promise to support the Church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

What this question describes: Your **PARTICIPATION** in the life of the church

Main Topics: Being an active member in the church, prayer

Storyline: Our Mission and Participation

Jesus Storybook Bible: pg. 222-227, 318-333

Biblical Texts: Gen 12:1 – 3; 1 Peter 2; 1 Co 12; Eph 2:10

Key Worship Practices: Participating in Worship; Membership; Offering; Intercessory Prayer; Benediction

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

- Question #88: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?
 - o *A: The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are, his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.*
- Question #90: How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?
 - o *A: That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.*
- Question #98: What is prayer?
 - o *A: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.*

Journal/Homework Questions:

Do you have questions about this material and vow #4? (Write them down below)

Why is it important for us to participate in the worship of the church?

Why is it important for us to participate in the work of the church?

What are a few ways you can serve others in the church?

Why is the phrase “to the best of your ability” included in the vow?

Group Exercise:

Look at last week’s church bulletin and list/describe each part of the service. What is each part trying to communicate to the congregation? Talk about the announcements, the prayer list, and the giving update. Why are these included each week?

(Homework: Prepare the material for class #6 and come ready to talk about it)

Class #6: Membership Vow #5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?

What this question describes: The **PROTECTION** God provides for you in the church

Main Topics: The Role of the Church, Church Leadership, Submission to Christ

Storyline: Our Growth in Grace, Recognizing Our Need for Help from Others in the Church

Jesus Storybook Bible: 130-135

Biblical Texts: Psalm 23; Proverbs 3:11-12; Matthew 18:16-20; John 10:11-15; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5;

Hebrews 12:7-11, 13:7-9, 16-19

Key Worship Practices: Preaching and sacraments by elders; corporate elements (reading, singing) that bind our hearts together; confessions of faith that strengthen the church body

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

- Question #26: How do[es] Christ execute the office of a king?
 - o *A: Christ execute[s] the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.*

Westminster Confession of Faith (Chapter 30)

- **Section 1:** The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of His Church, hath therein appointed government, in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.
- **Section 2:** To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel; and by absolution from censures, an occasion shall require.
- **Section 3:** Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

Journal/Homework Questions:

Do you have questions about this material and vow #5? (Write them down below)

Have you ever had a teacher/coach that challenged you to keep trying to get/do better? What did you appreciate about this person? Why was it important for them to be both challenging AND encouraging?

How important is a shepherd to his sheep? What does the Bible tell us about what the shepherd does for his sheep?

Why is it so important for us to ask for help when we need it?

Why did God place officers in the church? Why is this a good thing instead of a bad thing?

In Scripture we are called to obey those in authority over us? Does this mean that we can NEVER question what they are doing and why they are doing it?

Who is the ultimate head of the church? Why is it important for church officers to remember that they are ultimately under the authority of King Jesus and will be held accountable for their actions?

Think about your parents, teachers, etc. Why can discipline actually be a good thing in your life? What is the goal of “helpful” discipline?

Why is it important to remember that your elders and deacons love you and your family?

What are some ways we “submit to the government and discipline of the church”?

What are some ways we can “study the peace and purity” of the church?

(Homework: In preparation for your elder interview (Don’t worry...it’s NOT scary!) prepare a written testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ and write down a few sentences about why you want to join Grace Presbyterian Church.)

My Written Testimony of My Faith in Jesus Christ:

Why I Want to Join Grace Presbyterian Church: