

# CROSS & SPIRE

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## Our Mission

Hi FBC Family,

With the start of a new fiscal year at FBC, I think it is a great time to revisit our mission statement and values. Our mission statement is this:

“God’s everlasting love creates our fellowship, and from that love we equip one another to serve our community in love.”

Understanding God’s love for us, and how it creates and influences our fellowship, equipping, and service, is fundamental to our ministry at FBC and our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. So, let’s dive into John 3:16–21:

*“16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*

John 3:16 is one of the most well-known verses in all of Scripture. It starts with the Greek word *gar* (γάρ). *Gar* is a postpositive, which means it is not the first word written in a sentence, but it is often translated as though it comes at the start of the sentence. It is a word that connects what came before it with what comes directly after it. So, to understand John 3:16–21, we must understand what comes before it.

Jesus is teaching Nicodemus and tells him that unless a person is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God. This blows Nicodemus’ mind, and he asks Jesus how it is possible for an old man to be born again. Jesus tells him that one must be born of “water and the Spirit.”

Nicodemus does not understand what Jesus is saying, so Jesus draws on an Old Testament event to help him understand. In Numbers 21, the Israelites are traveling from Mount Hor, and they become impatient and speak against God and Moses. Because of their sin, God sends “fiery serpents” among the people. The snakes bite people, and people begin to die. The people recognize their sin and ask Moses to pray for their deliverance from the snakes. God instructs Moses to make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live. Moses does as he is instructed, and he lifts the bronze serpent on a pole for the people to look at and be healed.

Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be lifted up like the bronze serpent was lifted up in the desert, and that in doing so, whoever believes in him will have eternal life.

Jesus uses John 3:16–21 to further expound his teaching to Nicodemus. I think a more rigid translation of verse 16 is helpful in understanding the heart of this text: *“For in this way God loved the world.”* The phrase “in this way” shows us the manner in which God chose to demonstrate the depths of his love for us. He gave us his one and only Son. The verb “gave” means to give or donate as an expression of generosity. Colin Brown, the author of *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, says, “This opens up the NT teaching that God is a God who gives, and that his giving is seen supremely in the redeeming work of Christ.” This simple statement that God gave his Son is not simple; it is the summation of the depth and breadth of God’s love for us.

God sent his Son into the world to accomplish something: that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. The verb “believes” is a participle, which describes ongoing action. “Whoever is believing in him” tells us that our belief in Jesus is not a one-time statement we make, nor is it a momentary emotional high driven by fleeting feelings. Rather, it is the constant and continual way we live our lives. True belief in God should be an ever-present aspect of our daily lives.

Verse 17 gives us another gar phrase. What is said in verse 17 is further clarified by what follows. God sent his Son into the world for what purpose? Not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. God’s intent and the reality of the world are made clear here. It is not God’s desire that anyone be condemned, but to be saved, you must believe — you must be believing — that it is through Jesus that we are saved. He is the agent of our salvation. A T-shirt I once saw said it well: “Know Him, Know Salvation. No Him, No Salvation.”

Verse 18 is much simpler to understand when you pair it with Romans 5:6–8:

*“6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die — 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Before Christ’s redemptive work, all of humanity throughout all of human history were, and are, enemies of God because of our innate sinful nature. Through Christ’s redemptive work, we now have the opportunity to enter into God’s salvation and out of condemnation.

For brevity’s sake, I will briefly comment on the last few verses. Verses 19–21 state the legal judgment God has made: the world is dark, and so too are those who live in it. We will either remain in the dark, because of and in our wickedness, hating the light, or we can do what is true — that is, truly believe in Jesus and all that he has done and promised to do — living our lives in a manner that accords with his standards. And when the dark world sees the light through us, they will know that it is because of God. He is the means by which we are able to be light in a dark world.



## **GET INVOLVED!**

### **Mark Your Calendar:**

- June 14: Children’s Day—End of Sunday School Year. Also, OPEN HOUSE to thank our donors.
- June 21: Father’s Day. Baby Bottles due for Dayspring Pregnancy Care Center Fundraiser.
- July 10-11: Vacation Bible School—2 evenings, dinner provided.

### **Ongoing Groups:**

With summer approaching, some of our ongoing small groups and studies will be on hiatus. Please note the following:

**Monday Evening Prayer Meeting** will continue through the summer, meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. Led by Betsy Wotton, the group prays for individual requests, those shared by the congregation, prayers from the prayer box in the lobby, and prayer for our community and beyond. Speak to Betsy for details or just come.

**Tuesday Evening Women's Small Group** will meet at 6 p.m. in the sanctuary on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Led by Angie Stephens and Anne Pinilla, the group is beginning a study of I and II Peter and plans to complete I Peter chapter 1 by the 16<sup>th</sup> before taking a break for the summer.

**Wednesday Morning Women's Small Group** meets at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary and is co-led by Carol Rataj and Betsy Wotton. The group is studying *Life Without Lack* by Dallas Willard. Carol calls it "a wonderful study of Psalm 23." The group will continue to meet through the summer. Call Carol for more information or email her at [carolrataj3@gmail.com](mailto:carolrataj3@gmail.com).

**Thursday Evening Millennial Group** meets for dinner from 5:30-6 p.m. then study from 6-7 p.m. Led by Pastor Ryan, the group will meet through the summer and is studying the book of Isaiah. Open to all Millennials. Call Pastor Ryan or just come.

**Thursday Evening Bible Study** led by Rick Pinilla meets at 6:30 in various homes. The group will be on hiatus over the summer. Speak to Rick for more information.

**Thursday Evening Bible Study** led by Roger & Betsy Wotton meets at 6:30 p.m. in various homes. On June 4<sup>th</sup> the group will begin a study of I and II Peter and will meet through the summer. Speak to Roger or Betsy for more information.

**Saturday Morning Men's Group** meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday morning of the month at 8:30 in the large 2<sup>nd</sup> floor classroom. No breakfast, but coffee and sometimes doughnuts are

provided. The group will continue to meet through the summer. Speak with Roger for more information.

**SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2026**

**First Baptist Church**

**OPEN HOUSE**

**Come Celebrate!**

**Thank Our Donors**

**Brings Your Friends and  
Neighbors**

**Come to the worship service at  
10:30 and stay for the fellowship  
and tour the building**

### **Ministries:**

Our in-house ministries, the Raven Box Food Pantry and the Community Dinner are direct-impact outreaches of First Baptist Church. Anyone who stops by the Green St. side of the church on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of each month from 10-11 a.m. can receive a bag of non-perishable food. Catherine Souza's team of 5 dedicated volunteers run a very efficient and effective ministry. If you'd like to volunteer, see Catherine Souza. Monetary donations are always welcome. Since the Pantry has an organized specific menu of non-perishable food, please see Catherine for pantry needs. Deb Girdwood and Mike Barragan head up the once monthly Community Dinner. This growing ministry invites people on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month from 5-6:15 p.m. to dine in our 1<sup>st</sup> floor lobby or take out home-cooked, nutritious meals. Church members and church groups can

sign up to host a Community Dinner and experience the joy of sharing food with our neighbors. Please contact Deb or Mike for more information or just come and visit with our neighbors.

If you are not yet a member of First Baptist Church, what are you waiting for?

Join this summer!

See Pastor Ryan

### **Opportunities to Serve:**

- Children's Sunday School is about to end for the Summer. If you feel a calling to teach children or to help out in the classroom, the Sunday School needs you. Classes for Pre-school through Middle School will re-open in the fall. Contact Catherine Souza or Deb Girdwood for more information.
- Our Raven Box Food Pantry and Community Dinner ministries are always looking for people to get involved. Both ministries are hoping to expand to serve more people in need. See the Ministries section above for more details, and contact Catherine Souza to volunteer for the Food Pantry or Deb Girdwood or Mike Barragan to volunteer for the Community Dinner.

### **Shepherds' Report:**

At the May 12, 2026 Shepherds' meeting, the Shepherds voted for Dave Cole to continue as Chair with Bobby Souza to fill in if Dave is out. Bobby Souza reported that he and Keith Davio are busy sealing and prepping the walls in the basement for painting. Sanding to begin this Wednesday, May 13). Terry Bolduc and crew will begin painting as soon as the walls are sanded and the basement cleaned of dust. Discussed updating the Building Committee's priority list. The Shepherds will begin with what's left on the

Building Expense Report's priority list and add what we think is needed, looping in the Finance Committee, and turn it over to the Trustees for the June meeting. Deb Girdwood reports that the C. E. schedule for the summer is complete with June 14 being Children's Day. It will coincide with the church Open House scheduled for the same day. The Sunday School children will sing with the Worship Team. Vacation Bible School (VBS) will run the evenings of July 10-11 with dinner provided. A slideshow showcasing the VBS will be shown on Sunday, July 12 during worship. Family Fun Night in the Park will be Wednesday, August 14 from 5-7 p.m. Rally Day, the beginning of the Sunday School year, will be September 13. The Fall Festival in the Park will be October 17 from 12-2 p.m. The new Sunday School curriculum focused on the New Testament has been ordered. Invitations to the church Open House will go out to our donors before the end of the month.

### **"God's Light for Dark Times"** **by Rick Pinilla, Pastor Emeritus**

God's people are called to be realists about the world, human beings, and themselves. You can't miss it if you read the Bible. After the fall of human beings in Genesis three, God tells us what our sin has unleashed into the world and all he says is very familiar to us: the relentless conflict with evil, the hardness of simply making a living and the difficulty of managing our most precious relationship—man and wife—in this world. From there the story gets worse: murder in the family, the growth of civilization accompanied by a growing defiance of God. The promise in Genesis 3:15 is a ray of hope: the "seed of woman" will crush the evil released into the world by our sin. Abraham is called when the story looks bleak. Is he the promised seed, or maybe his family? The word could refer to either or both. He and his seed will be a blessing to all the families of the earth; but despite his great faith, he is very flawed as are his sons and the nation that descended from

them. God rescued them out of slavery in Egypt and made them his representatives in the world, but despite many bright spots, the trend was downhill until conquest and exile. The prophets all promised that God's promise to Eve was good, the seed will defeat the evil unleashed into our world by us, but their message leaves us no room for doubt about our world or us in our sin.

Of course, God's promise was fulfilled spectacularly in Jesus Christ our Lord. His death destroyed the power of sin and Satan to keep us from God and made it possible for us to be transformed by God through trust in him, but the world has not changed much. The descriptions of it in the New Testament and on the lips of Jesus read like a contemporary description of our streets and families. I have mentioned Romans one more than once as a description of a society which has abandoned the knowledge of God. It reads like a front-page account of Western Civilization. I could add Paul's description of human society in its slavery to sin and Satan in Ephesians two and his description of human descent into moral and spiritual blindness in Ephesians 4:17ff, and on and on.

It is clear that God intends to rub our noses in it. He doesn't want us to miss it: there is no hope in this world apart from Christ, and all who trust in him will never be ashamed of that choice. Nevertheless, we still have to live here. And Jesus doesn't mince words about the experience: "In this world, you will have trouble...I have chosen you out of the world. Therefore, the world will hate you."

Believe it or not, my topic today is joy. I am not kidding. Did you know that the command to rejoice is one the most often repeated in Scripture? It is inserted right in the depressing descriptions of our world and ourselves. For example, because of his faithfulness to Christ, Paul was imprisoned by corrupt politicians and harassed by envious fellow Christians. In a letter written from his Roman imprisonment he said,

"But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering, (a reference to death by execution that was the possible outcome of his imprisonment) ... I rejoice and share my joy with you. You, too, rejoice and share your joy with me.... Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice" (Philippians 2:17-18, 3:4). Apparently, God is serious about both the stern clarity of our perception of the character of our world in sin and the life of joy we should live in it. Don't misunderstand this. This is not a twisted demand that we grin and bear it by sheer will. It is an invitation to partake of the joy of God himself. It is a promise for those who come home to God, by trust in Christ, "With joy you will draw water from the waters of salvation... And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Both of these promises are in Isaiah. They are descriptions of those saved by God through the

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Messianic king and Servant who came to us in Jesus Christ. The point is, if you are not living in joy, despite this world, you are missing out. It is God's gift to us in this world of sin and trouble. In the rest of this article, I want to pass on the ways I have learned from Scripture to experience that joy.

First, we must complain. Yes, I mean it. I am not talking about whining to friends or spouses. Nor am I telling you to embrace the self-defeating attitude so praised in our world of claiming to be a victim. The Bible is plain. We are a part of the problem: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8). I am talking about complaining to God in honest prayer. The Bible is full of prayers of

complaint. They are given to teach us that God wants us to come to him with them. In almost every case God meets the complainer in his prayer and restores his joy. See for example, Psalm 13, 73; Lamentations three. I can tell you from personal experience that it works.

Remember all that God has done in history and in your own life and all he is and all he promises. This also works very well because God meets us in our thanksgiving. Read Psalm 16. It begins with a desperate plea for protection, but then for the rest of the song David recounts God's grace to him, and us. By the end of the Psalm, the trouble that launched his prayer is lost in the joyous revel in God. This is the theme of Isaiah 40-66 addressed to a people heading through a time of unprecedented hardship and trouble. Isaiah just reminds them again and again about who God is and what he has done and what he has promised, including the promise of joy cited above, (Isaiah 51:11).

Let go of your trouble. I don't mean quit or become irresponsible. I mean release your problems to God. The famous command of God in Psalm 46 is usually translated, "Be still and know that I am God," but it is more accurately rendered, "Let go and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!" In the context it is clear that the trouble that inspires us to pray is what he wants us to let go of. God is going to win, not us. Boy does that ease the stress! My mind is filled with very accurate doubts about myself, my friends, our leaders and the world in general; but a moment's thought about God sets these at rest. After all he has told us, "I will never fail you, I will never forsake you." This is what happened to Habakkuk. God showed him clearly the disaster which was coming upon Habakkuk's people and him. But he ended his book with a surrender to God's purpose, "I will quietly wait for the day of trouble...yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will take joy in the God of my salvation."

Finally, be festive. In Nehemiah, we have a record of the reestablishment of Jerusalem as a

worshiping community with the Law of God as its center. When the people engaged in the celebration by worship and hearing God's word expounded, they were overcome with sadness. Who could blame them? They saw their sin and its consequence clearly. The leaders rebuked the people, telling them to rejoice instead. This world of pop psychology has taught us that this is unhealthy and inauthentic. But Nehemiah is not teaching us to squelch genuine mourning, nor to live in denial. He is telling us to face reality: in a world of sin and trouble, in which we are complicit, there is forgiveness and the generosity and love of God. He then tells the people how to experience it: "Go your way. Eat rich food, drink wine and send portions to any who has nothing ready, for this is a day holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Of course, he is not telling us to partake of the debauched and drunken revelries of the world. He is telling us to have a feast with good food and wine. Notice, he connects it with the experience of God's joy and the strength which comes from it. We are called to be very intentional about celebrating God's gifts -- all of them. We of all people, who see sin and its result in our lives and the world so clearly, know what a miracle of forgiveness and lavish generosity each blessing we receive is. We have so much to celebrate because we can see that all we enjoy is a gift from a gracious God given as a token and celebration of his delight in us. He calls us his treasured possession and says in his presence is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore (Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 16:11). In celebrating these joys in our dark world, we receive them as they are intended, as tokens of love from the hand of our king.

So, be realists, but, "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice."