

# NEW MEMBERS CLASS

SESSION #1

## The Mission of the Church



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[rainsvillefirst.com](http://rainsvillefirst.com)

## Periodically, there are times when individuals, families, and organizations need to “reset” their mission and purpose...

In the course of the mundane, we can drift into waters that do not serve our original purpose or mission. Like a boat that is drifting along, you will suddenly awaken to the reality you are nowhere close to where you want to be or need to be. And its time to “reset” the course.

Churches are no exception. The first ten years of a new church’s life are filled with energy and passion, then complacency sits in, and the church begins to drift. They don’t mean to any more than the boat means to get off course. It just happens.

Periodically, in the life of a church, God will bring fresh vision, and if that vision is received, then a rebirth can happen within the church. But, a rebirth is never final. For a church to remain vital and on course to its mission and purpose, it must “reset” the mission from time to time.

Let’s look at **Matthew 10**. I believe verse 1 is as concise (or pregnant) a statement of Christianity that I can find in all of Scripture.

“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.”

Matthew 10:1 (NKJV)

First, I want you to see in this verse the two areas of the Christian life that every believer must be participating:

**individually** and in **community**

Jesus called the twelve disciples to Himself. This is a personal relationship with Jesus that is foundational to all we are about. Nothing can substitute for the personal nature of our salvation. There was a Call to Heed.

But He called twelve to be in community. They were not isolated and alone, but in a community. I believe later we can call that a church, which is a community of believers who individually are following Christ. But, they must be connected with others, in order to more fully and completely carry out the mission of Christ. There was a Community in which to belong.

But these disciples had a Commission to Obey...a call to mission.

He sent them out to do what He was doing. **Matthew 9:35** tells us Jesus was teaching, preaching, and healing. We are to do the work of Christ on this earth. It is not a suggestion, but a command.

As Rainsville First Baptist Church, we have developed a pathway of how to fulfill that mission. It has four overlapping, continually running tracks...

And there is an individual track and a corporate track...just like two train tracks running simultaneously and parallel – lest the train wreck and not be able to move forward to fulfill its purpose.

## The Spiritual Pathway

### WORSHIP (foundational)

If there is one of these areas that is more important than another, it is this. It is the starting blocks of all we do. You don't begin the race in the second lap.

Worship is the natural response of a born-again child of God, because they realize what has happened to them is not the result of their works or decision. They could not do what has been done – the opening of their blinded eyes, the changing of their cold, dead heart, the giving of life separate from possessions, prizes, and people, the forgiveness of sins, and providing a hope for the future that draws us into the future like a light draws a bug.

And our response is worship through praising God and living a life dedicated in obedience to the Word and fullness of the Spirit.

This is both personal and corporate. A lack of personal worship will, sooner or later, cause you to run so dry that corporate worship can no longer keep you on the right track, so you drift. Corporate worship alone is never sufficient, but personal worship will always lead you to wanting more and to regularly join in corporate worship.

Do you have a desire to worship? Do you have a reason to worship?

### SUNDAY SCHOOL (family)

But simply attending corporate worship is not enough. You need a spiritual family that will love you, care for you, that will know your name and needs. In our church, that is called our Sunday School ministry.

# The Spiritual Pathway

## SUNDAY SCHOOL (family)

Enrollment in Sunday School is the single most important figure we have. It's the number representing those who have given us the opportunity to minister to them.

Sunday School is where ministry to one another takes place in times of death, sickness, during family crises, hard times, needing food, financial support, or just needing a shoulder to cry on or a hand to hold.

Its where you are cared for when you become slack in your attendance.

It's the place where we reach out to our neighbors, community, and even our world.

Bible study is an important part of this, but it is not the only part. These other areas all contribute to caring for the whole person.

You need this "larger group" of family connections, but not as large as the worship family environment.

You are not ready to go to discipleship groups unless you are faithful in worship and an active member of a Sunday School class.

## J-LIFE GROUPS (our discipleship ministry)

In 2007, Bill Hybels apologized after 30 years at Willow Creek Community Church by making this statement to the church:

**"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between service, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."**

In other words, spiritual growth doesn't happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age-old spiritual practices of prayer, Bible reading, and relationships. We need accountability in a smaller group for our personal and corporate walk with God. This is where we go deeper in the Word, prayer, Scripture memorization, and mission.

# The Spiritual Pathway

## LIFE OF MINISTRY AND MISSIONS

The purpose of all of this is to bring everyone to a place of ministry and missions.

Its not just for the pastors or deacons, but we are all called to do what Jesus was doing.

We do this by serving in the church, by reaching others, by helping our neighbor, by personalizing our mission calling with asking God for a place in the world to connect our heart.

Wendell Berry once described his experience of paddling a canoe in the Kentucky River in a way that has significance for our church:

*"And so we stayed busy, keeping the canoe between the line of half- submerged shore trees in the line of drift that marked the channel. We weren't trying to hurry- the currents were carrying us as fast as it wanted to go-but it took considerable labor just to keep straight. It was like riding a spirited horse not fully bridle wise: we kept our direction by intention; there could be no dependence on habit or inertia; when our minds wandered the river took over and turned us according to inclinations of its own."*