**The Starting Point Class**

Leadership Conference 2013

Tim Christoson

**Introduction:**

**1. Understanding the Importance of the Class**

A. It allows the newest people to get to know the pastor

B. It allows the pastor to get to know the newest people

C. It answers the common questions of newer people

D. It provides the opportunity to define our doctrine and philosophy

E. It establishes heightened expectations for new members (increases retention rate)

F. It brings potential problems to the surface earlier

**2. Groups to Target for the Class**

A. New members who have joined since the last class

B. Recent guests who have not yet joined the church

**3. Preparing to Conduct the Class**

A. Include a statement about the required class in your membership welcome materials and as a part of your baptism process. (Welcome Aboard)

B. Before the class, advertise for three straight weeks in the bulletin and announcements.

C. Host a reception with refreshments for recent guests (Coffee & Biscotti) two weeks before the class; distribute invites.

D. Email, call and invite the following groups:

1. Those who have joined since the last class.

2. Those who joined prior to the last class but missed a class.

3. Those who have visited the church in recent months.

4. Those who attend Sunday school but have not yet joined the church.

E. Prepare notebooks for the class

F. Arrange for select staff and deacons to help host the class

G. Prepare pre-printed nametags for all who RSVP (remember to have blank write-on tags for those who show up unannounced)

H. Send reminder emails and make reminder phone calls

I. Set up a check-in table with a secretary to distribute materials and take attendance

J. Provide refreshments for the class

**4. Content to Cover During the Class**

**A. Week one: The Story of Our Church**

What we’re trying to accomplish: We want the newcomers to get to know us personally, and to discover what makes our church unique. We want them to know what makes us tick, and to realize it’s the Scriptures.

Week One Handouts:

* Week #1 Lesson Outline
* Church Calendar
* Church Constitution
* School Brochure
* 25th Anniversary Book

**B. Week two: The Beliefs of Our Church**

What we’re trying to accomplish: We want them to understand where we stand doctrinally, and what it means to be a Bible believing Baptist. We hope they appreciate that sound doctrine drives our approach to ministry.

Week Two Handouts:

* Week #2 Lesson Outline
* LifeStages Adult Bible Fellowship Brochure
* Discipleship Interest Card
* *Trail of Blood* by J.M. Carroll
* *Why Baptists Are Not Protestants* Leaflet
* *A More Sure Word* by R.B. Oullette (by request; free on resource table)
* *A Glorious Church* by Mike Gass (by request; free on resource table)

**C. Week three: The Purpose of Our Church**

What we’re trying to accomplish: We want to paint a picture for what biblical values and behaviors are most important to us. Our purpose expresses what we are trying to accomplish, and how that translates to their role in the body of Christ. We want them to see themselves working through the ministry purpose, which is really in essence a *process*.

Week Three Handouts:

* Week #3 Lesson Outline
* Ministry Survey
* Giving Envelopes
* *Living on God’s Economy* by Paul Chappell
* Membership Covenant

**D. Week four: The Structure of Our Church**

What we’re trying to accomplish: We want these new members to understand how we operate, within a local church leadership structure that is based on the New Testament. We want them to know where to turn to get their questions answered, to develop spiritually, and to develop relationships within the body.

Week Four Handouts:

* Week #4 Lesson Outline
* Financial Policy Statement
* *Your Pastor and You* by Paul Chappell & Cary Schmidt

**5. Effectively Conducting the Class**

A. Effectively communicate with class participants:

1. Collect RSVP’s 7-14 days before the class begins

2. Remind all prospects by phone the Saturday before class begins

3. Email and call class absentees following each week

4. Thank people for participating (and remind them of next week’s topic) via email between classes

5. Remind all prospects by phone prior to each week

B. Arrange for select staff to assist in hosting the weekly classes

C. Invite select deacons to greet the class and pray weekly

D. Provide free resources at a book table on frequently asked questions

E. After week two or three, meet individually with all who have not yet joined, to encourage them to take the necessary step

F. Ask them to return the signed Covenant on week four

G. Take time for questions at the end of each week’s lesson

H. Remind people to participate in the new members reception on week four

I. Invite all class participants to a meal for fellowship with pastoral staff

J. Take photos of class participants for use internally and on a public bulletin board

**6. Following Up After the Class**

A. Host a New Members Reception on the Sunday night of week four

B. Follow up on those who have expressed interest in discipleship

C. Follow up on those who have expressed interest in ministry involvement

D. Follow up on those who have yet to submit their Membership Covenant

E. Ensure that participants connect with an Adult Bible Fellowship for ongoing growth