

Pastor's Class

Fall 2017

Session I

First Things First

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

A. OVERVIEW

The Pastor's Class, is a must for every person who considers Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church a potential church home. Though completion of the Pastor's Class is a requirement for joining Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church, it is designed with a "no pressure" atmosphere, giving the inquirer an opportunity to look without being asked to "buy." It is very likely that throughout the class some of your specific questions may remain unanswered. If that is the case, we encourage you to feel free to ask any question in the class or contact any of the church staff to find the answers. We believe that God has brought you here for a purpose, and we are dedicated to helping you discover and fulfill that purpose.

SECTION I

"First Things First" The first class includes an introduction and overview of the Pastor's Class. The highlight of this class is discovering together, the stunning Father-love of our God and His pursuit of us, his lost children.

SECTION II

"The Core Values of SRPC" In classes 2 and 3, we will discuss what makes Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church alive and unique. We will begin with the SRPC story, a retelling of our unusual founding and growth. We will cover the core values of our church, and illustrate how God has built this ministry in a powerful way. These classes should give new hope to everyone, but especially to those who have had disappointing and disillusioning experiences in former churches.

When Section II is complete, you will have gained insight into what makes a church organization healthy and fruitful for God's kingdom.

SECTION III

"What SRPC Believes" If previous classes have revealed why SRPC is special, this class will underscore why we are solid. In a survey fashion we will be introduced to the doctrinal beliefs of SRPC. It's typical that after this section you will feel very secure in the biblical and historical doctrines which make up the foundation of our ministry. I think you'll be pleased to see the firm conviction with which we hold to biblical essentials and the charity we extend where minor doctrinal differences are held.

SECTION IV

"SRPC Membership" The last class covers the ministries provided to move each member toward spiritual maturity. The commitment to Christ and His church, expected of every member, is covered in detail. At this point you will not only have made new friends, but will find yourself able to make an informed decision about whether SRPC is the church to call "home." We hope it will be!

B. SCHEDULE

Sept 6	Session 1	First Things First
Sept 13	Session 2	Core Values - Part I
Sept 20	Session 3	Core Values - Part II
Sept 27	Session 4	What SRPC Believes
Oct 4	Session 5	SRPC Membership

Other dates for you to note:

Oct 15	5:00 pm—Meet with interview teams in the Florida Room
Nov 1	Session 6— <i>Mandatory</i> 1-hour class for anyone wishing to be baptized
	Nov 11/12
Oct 21/22	New members join the church publicly
Nov 11/12	Baptisms

C. STANDARDS FOR PASTOR'S CLASS COMPLETION

1. Attend all of the Pastor's Class sessions, though it is permitted to make up two sessions by CD or online (www.sevenrivers.org/pcaudio). If you will miss more than that, arrangements should be made to complete the sessions during the next Pastor's Class.
2. Do your homework! The following book (available in the back of the classroom tonight or in the bookstore on weekends) is assigned reading: *The Apostles' Creed: Rooted*, by Raymond F. Cannata & Joshua D. Reitano.
3. Borrow, view and return the DVD entitled, "Why Do We Baptize Our Children" by Richard Pratt. Several copies are available at the back of the class.
4. Attend worship on the weekends during the class. Attending weekend worship is the best way to get to know the people and philosophy of SRPC.

II. AN INTRODUCTION TO CHRISTIANITY

Luke 15:1-3,11-32 Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. And He told them this parable, saying,... A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

But when he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found." And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and

approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be. And he said to him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound." But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. But he answered and said to his father, "Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him." And he said to him, "My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

A Christian is a person who has been restored to the proper relationship with the _____ by the work of our _____. Becoming a Christian involves the following steps:

Step 1

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____.

Christians are people who admit that they are broken. Thus, we are separated from our Father—and the result is a God-shaped vacuum in our souls. We try to fill this vacuum without God...we all run from God.

- 1) We run by being *secular* (irreligious)—we avoid Jesus by attempting to find life on our own.
- 2) We run by being *religious*—we avoid Jesus by producing a righteous life on our own.

Which way has a harder time—admitting separation from the Father. The older brother is more lost because he cannot see his lostness, his hard work and morality have blinded him. It is commonly thought that the Xian message is "become religious and virtuous instead of irreligious and immoral." The Pharisees were deeply religious, but enemies of God. The gospel calls the irreligious and religious to stop "self-salvation" and discover grace. The humble are in; the proud are out.

Step 2

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. *Titus 3:5* He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

A) There is a way home. You have a father and you can go home and know his embrace and his smile. You can be right with him. You can know His kiss. How many believe God is angry? How many have never known a father's love? **B)** You can be welcomed home but not by religion, not by providing your own righteousness, but by grace. **C)** Righteousness is not something we give to God, but something he gives to us. Who produced the righteousness we need? The prodigal doesn't pay back his debt. The Father gives him the robe, an unmistakable sign of his restored standing in the family. The Christian stakes his whole eternity not on his life, but upon the life and death of Christ. Through Christ's work, we can be more loved, valued and accepted by God than we would have ever dared to imagine.

Step 3

THERE IS SOMETHING TO _____.

A Christian is a person who has stopped running from God (which the Bible calls repentance) and now runs to him for grace (which the Bible calls faith). They have stopped trying to earn the favor of God and are trusting in Jesus' work for them as their sure ground for acceptance with God.

Yesterday, we met at a huge Starbucks in the University district. As I sat and listened to her story, I fought tears. Basically, she'd been raised an atheist and while in college, decided that there must be a God. At that point, she began to search for Him—literally all over the world. As I listened to her, it was obvious that, although she thought she had been pursuing God, He had been pursuing her.

After her story, I said, "So, why aren't you a Christian?" To which she replied, "Well, I guess I don't have what it takes. I'm afraid I'm not good enough and would not be faithful enough." At that point, I took the liberty of saying, "Jeanie, have you not heard anything I've been saying for the past two months?"

Her turn to cry.

It literally seemed like a light went on in her eyes, "THAT'S THE POINT, ISN'T IT— I DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES AND NEVER WILL—THAT'S WHY I NEED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST."

My reply, "Bingo." Although I don't usually ask people to pray in the middle of bustling coffeehouses, I said, "Do you think you ought to tell God that you don't have what it takes and you need the righteousness of Jesus?"

Pregnant silence.

"Right now?" she asked. "It's up to you," I replied. That was it. Right there in Starbucks, Jeanie confessed her brokenness and asked God to give her the righteousness of Christ.

Faith and repentance can be expressed at any time by surrendering your will to Christ. It may be helpful to pray like this:

“Lord Jesus, I am blown away by the notion that you could love me. I admit that I have tried to do life apart from you. I do believe you lived the life of obedience I haven’t and you died as a substitute for me. So now I humbly ask you to forgive my foolishness and love me as your son or daughter. I trust that the righteousness of Christ and not my good works is what makes me delightful to you. I surrender my life to you as my Lord. Thank you for seeking me, finding me and bringing me home to you.”

ASSIGNMENT:

1. Purchase *The Apostles’ Creed: Rooted*, by Raymond F. Cannata & Joshua D. Reitano and read the Preface and chapters 1-3 (pp1-33).
2. See you in worship this weekend!