

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS



A Biblical Understanding
of Church Membership

Pastor Kevin Inman

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A Note from Our Pastor...

On behalf of the congregation of Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church, I am glad that you have chosen to investigate Membership. One of the things I enjoy the most about my job is being able to sit down with new people and talk with them about the Lord, his church, & where they fit in. I hope that this series will be just as enjoyable to you as it is to me.



Attending this class in person or going through the sessions at home via audio files, video files, and this workbook does not make you a member of Grace Point at Eagle Heights. It is a prerequisite to membership, but it doesn't automatically make you a member. You have the option after completing this class to prayerfully fill out an application for membership. We want everyone that God leads to GPEH to join, jump in and serve with us. At the end of these sessions there will be a Membership Covenant to be signed if you know God is leading you to become a member of Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church.

Membership is both a privilege and a responsibility. Like being a member of any team, or a partner in any organization, there is work to be done. We think it's the greatest work in the world. Loving and serving others as we love and serve our Savior.

So again, thanks for your interest in membership here at Grace Point at Eagle Heights. Now, turn the page and let's jump into discovering meaningful membership.

T. Kevin Inman
Pastor, Grace Point at Eagle Heights

*Grace Point at Eagle Heights is a Bible Believing Church
that is rooted in a commitment to the fundamental
distinctives of the Christian faith.
We strive to be Bible focused & Christ centered in all we do.
Our Mission is to glorify God as we make Disciples like Jesus.*

What It Means to Be a Christian

This is where it begins. Membership in a church is meaningless if you are not a Christian.

Being a Christian is more than identifying yourself with a particular religion or affirming a certain value system. Being a Christian means you have embraced what the Bible says about God, mankind, and salvation. Consider the following truths found in Scripture.

God is the SOVEREIGN Creator. Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

God is perfectly HOLY God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3), therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13). God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Mankind is completely SINFUL According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: "There is no man who does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46). That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own. (Romans 3:10-12).

Sin Demands a just PENALTY God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death: (Ezekiel 18:4). That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences.

Jesus alone is LORD and SAVIOR. The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (Colossians 1:16). Therefore, He owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship. Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior who paid the penalty and died for sinners (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice and Christ's perfect life satisfied the demands of God's holiness (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26).

The Character of Saving FAITH. True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin (Luke 13:3,5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9) and pursue Christ (Matthew 11:28-30; John 17:3) and obedience to Him (1 John 2:3). It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).

What is a Church?

A Church is primarily a body of people who profess Christ and give evidence that they have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. A church is the “ekklesia”, the **CALLED-OUT** ones. The church has been called out of the world and into fellowship with Christ and one another.

The Bible uses several different metaphors in describing the church.

1. The Church is a . . . **FELLOWSHIP** Acts 2:42
“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)
A top priority in a fellowship is **UNITY**. A good structure promotes unity and downplays differences.
2. The Church Is A... **FAMILY** 1 Peter 3:8
“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;”
So, we operate based on **RELATIONSHIPS** not rules.
3. The Church Is A... **BODY** Romans 12:5
“so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:5)
We are a body — not a business! We are an organism — not an organization!
Therefore, we function based on **SPIRITUAL GIFTS** not elected offices.
4. The Church Is A... **FLOCK** Ephesians 4:11-13
“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”
(Ephesians 4:11-13)
Therefore, it is cared for and led by **SHEPHERDS**

“We are the first generation that believes that we can reach the culture by becoming the culture.”
– Paul Washer

A BIBLICAL CHURCH:

1. Has for its HEAD the only sovereign Lord Jesus Christ.

"He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." (Colossians 1:18)

2. Has for its FOUNDATION the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed." (1 Peter 2:4-8)

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11)

3. Has godly LEADERSHIP

"For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain," (Titus 1:7)

"An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach," (1 Timothy 3:2)

4. Lives on the Word of God and PREACHES the whole counsel of the Word.

"I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths." (2 Timothy 4:1-4)

5. Is not ashamed of the GOSPEL

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1:16)

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

6. Will CONTEND for the Faith.

"Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 3-4)

7. Will suffer PERSECUTION

"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12)

Is Church Membership Biblical?

I want you to think of four people and their attitudes toward church:

- John: follows Jesus but not into “organized religion.” He feels he worships best by going for a hike on Sunday.
- Leann: church hopper. Here for a while, there for a while. Somewhere pretty much every Sunday.
- Natasha: found a great singles group. Always there on Sunday night, and shows up at church in the morning when the sermon seems like it’ll be interesting.
- Jose: loves the preaching at this church, but tends to slip out right afterward. Never really thought about joining. What’s the point?

Many churches are simply places where people go to watch things happen. But the church cannot sit in isolation. Its members cannot merely come in, sit down, walk out, and say that they are involved in the church. Tremendous responsibilities are laid at the feet of all Christians to minister to other believers.
MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). *The Master’s plan for the church* (p. 109). Chicago: Moody Press.

Q: What do all these people have in common? They all see themselves as Christians; they all see the church as pretty unrelated to their faith. And they all share a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to be a Christian.

Look at the Purpose of the Church in the Book of Ephesians

- We are going to answer “Why Join a Church?” by taking a tour of Ephesians.
- Chapter 1: beautiful description of our salvation.
- Chapter 2: how we’re saved (**read 2:4**)
- That’s theology—and then, end of chapter 2, application. Dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles is gone (2:14-15). **Read 3:6**
- Why did God do this? **Read 3:10**
 - Through *the church*? Yes. Local church is at the core of God’s plan to glorify himself.
 - Think back to what Jesus says in John 13:34-35:
“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- Love between Christians isn’t just “extra credit.” It’s essential.
 - Church is messy. It hurts. It’s not easy. But that’s the whole point.
“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?”
 - That’s why a small group of people just like you does not do this. That’s why a singles group isn’t a church. That’s why attending church but not investing in relationships misses the point.

“If you have no interest in actually committing yourself to an actual group of gospel-believing, Bible-teaching Christians, you might question whether you belong to the body of Christ at all!” -Mark Dever, “What is a Healthy Church?”

Is the Church Inclusive or Exclusive?

The very ideas of *inclusion* and *exclusion* in any context make people think of elitism or racism. Still, church membership is an idea with deep biblical roots:

1. The garden of Eden had an inside and an outside (Gen. 2:8, 3:24).
2. Noah's ark had an inside and an outside (Gen. 7:16).
3. The people of God in the wilderness had to be ceremonially clean to remain inside the camp and not to be cast outside (Lev. 13:46, Num. 5:3).
4. The nation of Israel was to have an inside and an outside, as represented by food laws, festivals, political boundaries, places of worship, and even strong provisions against inter-marriage (Lev. 11, Lev. 23, Josh. 14-21, 1 Kings 8, Deut. 7:3).
5. In the New Testament, the ethnic and cultural boundary markers of the Old Testament are exploded. But a clear, bright line remains between those who are God's people and those who are not, as indicated by their profession of faith and the visible fruit of their lives, as well as by the practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom. 6:3-4, 1 Cor. 11:17-34, Gal. 3:27).

Baptism and the *Lord's Supper* are what give substance and shape to a church's membership. There is an inside (those who have been baptized and are welcomed to the Lord's table) and an outside (those who are not).

In 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 Paul challenges the Corinthian church to judge those who are *inside* the church and leave the judging of *outsiders* to God. How did the Corinthians know who was in and who was out? They knew whom Paul was talking about because some people had formally, publicly identified themselves with the church in Corinth while the rest of the city had not. Those who had were inside the church. They were the church's members. Those who hadn't were not.

"A healthy church is not a church that's perfect and without sin. It has not figured everything out. Rather, it's a church that continually strives to take God's side in the battle against the ungodly desires and deceits of the world, our flesh, and the devil. It's a church that continually seeks to conform itself to God's Word." - "What is a Healthy Church?"

"Why do we go to church? Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." We don't attend church just to listen. We should be encouraging one another to do good. Every Christian ought to be like a battery that joins with other believers and corporately increases the church's output."
MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1991). *The Master's plan for the church* (p. 109). Chicago: Moody Press.

Every Christian should join a church

Every Christian should join a church because Scripture requires it. Granted, there is no direct command in Scripture that says, “Every Christian must join a local church,” but two factors in Scripture indicate that every Christian should be a member of a local church.

1. Jesus established the church to be a public, earthly institution that would mark out, affirm, & oversee those who profess to believe in him (Matt. 16:18-19, 18:15-20).

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:18-19)

“If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. 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. Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:15-20)

Jesus established the church to publicly declare those who belong to him in order to give the world a display of the good news about himself (John 17:21, 23; see also Eph. 3:10). Jesus wants the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn't. And how is the world to know who belongs to him and who doesn't? They are to see which people publicly identify themselves with his people in the visible, public institution he established for this very purpose. They're to look at the members of his church. And if some people claim to be part of the universal church even though they belong to no local church, they reject Jesus' plan for them and his church. Jesus intends for his people to be marked out as a visible, public group, which means joining together in local churches.

2. Scripture repeatedly commands Christians to submit to their leaders (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (Hebrews 13:17)

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13)

The only way to do that is by publicly committing to be members of their flock, and saying in effect, “I commit to listening to your teaching, following your direction, and to submitting to your leadership.” There's no way to obey the scriptural commands to submit to your leaders if you never actually *submit* to them by joining a local church.

A Few Other Good Reasons to Join a Church

In addition to the New Testament's teaching that every Christian should submit to a local church and its leaders (see Matt. 18:15-20, Heb. 13:17), there are *many* other good reasons to join a church:

1. **ASSURE yourself.** Membership is the church's way of affirming the validity of someone's profession of faith (Matt. 16:19, 18:18).

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19)

"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18)

2. **EVANGELIZE the world.** We can preach the gospel to our community and the world much better together than we can apart. Not only that, but as we covenant with other Christians to love, encourage and admonish one another, we display a living, breathing image of the gospel to the world.

3. **EXPOSE false gospels.** As the members of a church support and submit to its teaching, they collectively say, "This is the truth! World, pay attention!" and their unity in doing so works to expose corruptions and imitations of the true gospel.

4. **EDIFY the church.** When we join a local church we let the pastors and other members of that church know that we intend to attend regularly, give faithfully, pray for the church, and serve the church as we have opportunity. So join a church in order to build it up (Eph. 4:11-16).

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

5. **GLORIFY God.** (John 13:34-35).

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35)

We testify to the world about what God is like by how we love one another—By committing to one another as members of the same church we display the glory of God's love—a committed, persevering, transforming love—as we image it in our lives together, and so bring him glory.

(Some of this material has been adapted from *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, pages 151-159)

What should a Church Expect from its Members?

A church should expect that its members will:

1. **Attend services regularly.** Hebrews 10:25 commands Christians not to forsake assembling together. Attending services regularly is one of the basic commitments of membership and one of the basic ways that a church member can grow in the faith, get to know other Christians, and allow the church leaders to shepherd and watch over his life.
2. **Attend communion particularly.** Members should strive to be present when Christ's death is commemorated, and the church's unity is displayed in communion.
3. **Attend members' meetings consistently** (when they are called). This is when the church makes decisions as a church that affect the whole church.
4. **Pray regularly.** For the church, staff, etc.
5. **Give regularly.** The apostle Paul writes, "One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches" (Gal. 6:6).
6. **Build relationships with other members.** Being a member in a local church is like being a hand or an eye (1 Cor. 12:21). You can't function without all the other parts of the body. Just as a body functions when each part does its job and works together with all the other members, a local church is built up into maturity in Christ as the members minister in an intimately interrelated way (Eph. 4:15-16, 1 Cor. 12:12-26). So, a church should expect that its members will build relationships with other members.
7. **Biblically Submit to the church's leaders.** The Scripture says, "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" (Heb. 13:17).
8. **Serve as God gives opportunity.** God has given spiritual gifts to every member of the body of Christ so that everyone would use his or her gifts to build up the entire body (1 Cor. 12:7). A church should expect that all of its members will serve the whole church as God enables.

(Some of this material has been adapted from *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever, pages 161-163)

If the church is a building, then we must be bricks in it; if the church is a body, then we are its members; if the church is a household of faith, then we are part of that household. Sheep are in a flock, and branches on a vine. Biblically, if we are Christians we must be members of a church. This membership is not simply the record of a statement we once made or of affection toward a familiar place. It must be the reflection of a living commitment or it is worthless.

What should be required of someone to join a Church?

To join a local church someone should be:

1. **A CHRISTIAN** Only someone who credibly professes faith in Christ should be a member of a Christian church. Acts 2:41-47
2. **BAPTIZED** Only those who have publicly identified with Christ and his church by baptism should be allowed to publicly identify with his church by membership. Acts 2:41-47
3. **A REGULAR attender.** A church cannot oversee and affirm a person's profession of faith if they do not regularly attend. Without attendance, membership is meaningless. Hebrews 10:24-25
4. **Someone who confesses the same FAITH as the church and is willing to live as a Christian together with the church.** A Christian should be able to affirm a church's statement of faith and church covenant. Only someone who agrees with the church's stated beliefs and who intends to live a life marked by love for the members of that church should be allowed to join.
5. **Willing to FOLLOW the leadership of the church.** If a person isn't willing to follow the church's leaders he will inevitably stir up division and strife. It's best for him to join a church whose leaders he *can* obey.
6. **Willing to SERVE others.** 100+ references to serving Christ and others in the New Testament. The priority of the bulk of these passages has the local church as its context. Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10

The main idea in all this is not to be exclusive or to turn people away.

The point in requiring all these things of prospective members is that **the church is supposed to reflect God's character to the world.**

When a church's members are genuine, growing Christians, **God's glory is put on display and the gospel is commended to the world.** It's loving to require that church members be genuine Christians: it's good for their own souls, it's good for non-Christians, and it brings glory to God.

"When a person becomes a Christian, he doesn't just join a local church because it's a good habit for growing in spiritual maturity. He joins a local church because it's the expression of what Christ has *made him*—a member of the body of Christ."
-Mark Dever, "What is a Healthy Church?"

Philosophy of Ministry at GPEH Church

Our philosophy of ministry begins here:

1. WE HAVE A HIGH VIEW OF GOD

- a. God is holy, righteous, and just (among other perfections).
- b. Holiness is one of His communicable attributes—thus we must seek to exemplify it! “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16)
We, then, must be holy (practical sanctification).

What does this say about my philosophy of ministry? It is crucial. A failure to have a high view of God..

- Leads to a toleration of sin
- Leads to a focus on man
- Evidenced in your teaching
- Evidenced in your programs
- Evidenced in how you do business!

RESULT: A man-centered ministry, pleasing peers rather than glorifying God.

We must ponder some questions:

- Do I compromise truth to please people?
- To maintain the status quo?
- To keep people from leaving?
- To keep money from leaving?

Here is another way of saying this principle: CHURCH IS DONE FOR GOD. We exist to give him glory. The church is the focus of that effort. It is where people are equipped to live godly lives.

- Affects how we do music (kind of songs).
- Affects how we approach church discipline.
- Affects the attitude of people for church.

We want to do all things with excellence because of reverence for the character of God.
This directly connects to worship: Scripture calls all believers to proclaim His glory in worship.

Worship is one of the defining characteristics of believers.

Phil 3:3—“We worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus.”

Though primary emphasis in Scripture is on a right heart in worship, the form of worship is also significant.

The form of worship must provide channels enable the believer to:

- Grasp the truth of God’s Word
- Ignite a passion for God
- Respond to the truths taught

This gets back to the idea that the church service is done FOR GOD.

2. WE HAVE A SUFFICIENT VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

A high view of God leads to viewing His Word as the perfect guide for our lives!

a. **Inspiration**—verbal, plenary inspiration (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

It is “God-breathed.” It originates from the very essence and being of God!

b. **Authority**—simply stated: What it says I must do (Psalm 119). If we are to have a biblical philosophy of ministry, it must seek its sole authority from the Word of God. When it is silent, we have freedom. When it gives hints and inferences, we hang on to those. As when it gives commands or principles, we never dream of violating them. You are never in danger of giving too much credence to the Book.

c. **Sufficiency**—2 Peter 1:3-4; Psalm 19

2 Tim. 3:17—“thoroughly furnished/equipped unto all good works!” A belief in the sufficiency of Scripture prohibits any attempt to integrate it with worldly philosophies.

d. **Relevant**—It is totally relevant for every situation. 2 Tim. 3:17—“profitable for...”

It may not give us an explicit answer to every specific problem, but it will always give us the principles by which we can, through obedience, glorify God. A failure to embrace this leads to the church producing people who pursue their own desires based upon an ungodly standard. Affirmation of God’s Word is crucial.

A right perspective of Scripture will be a commitment to:

- Teaching sound doctrine
- Teaching how Christians are to grow and live by it

The practical result of this in ministry is expository preaching, of course. But it also the constant reliance on Scripture for guidance. What does the Bible say about eldership? Divorce? Sanctification? Money? This is where the action is. This is why pastors and elders need to be experts in the book, because it is not only what they live by, and not only what the lead other with, but it is the manual for how they are to lead and structure the church.

3. WE HAVE A LOW VIEW MAN’S NATURE

An affirmation of God’s Word is the basis of a biblical view of mankind. What does the Bible teach us about mankind? Two very basic things:

A. Mankind is totally depraved.

On his own, he cannot do good (Rom 3:12—“There is none who does good”).

His heart is deceitfully wicked (Jer 17:9-10; Enosh, Gen 4:26).

His goal in life is selfishness and only evil continually (Gen 6:5).

B. Man was created to glorify God, but because of sin, he seeks to glorify himself (Rom. 3:23).

He will seek fulfillment from the world’s evil system (1 John 2:15-17).

He will seek answers from the world’s perspective.

But in salvation, man has a new nature. And they start a process where they spend the rest of their life becoming more and more like Christ.

So the church exists to disciple people. To show them what they were made for (to glorify God), and then how to do that better and better.

The pastor's job is to show people how point #A and point #B connect to daily living. Shepherding becomes a huge element of what we do. A church recognizes that on their own, people have no hope for salvation, and no intrinsic goodness at all. But in Christ, and with the Bible, people have the answers, and they have all the hope they need.

The church exists to teach them how to live, and this affects how they worship.

Scripture calls all believers to present ourselves in worship (Rom 12:1).

- a. Through eschewing the lifestyle of the world (Rom 12:2a)
- b. Through bringing one's thinking in line with God's Word (Rom 12:2b)

This requires a ministry strategy committed to spurring on the flock in this direction!

4. WE HAVE A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH. An accurate view of man enables us to correctly understand the purpose of the church. What is the purpose of the church? Let me suggest three:

a. The church exists to confess Christ as Lord. Peter's confession becomes the foundation of the church. This is one of the reasons we reject pedeo baptism, and why we strive to have a regenerate church membership. It is for believers, and not for unbelievers. What we do on Sundays is not for them, it is for us.

b. The church exists to be a repository of divine truth. First Tim 3:15— *"I write so you may know how to conduct yourselves in the church, which is the pillar and support of the truth."*

c. The church exists to provide a context of loving fellowship with one another for the purpose of mutual edification (Eph 3:16-19). Eph 4:12-16— *"...for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, to the building up of the body of Christ."*

d. The church exists as a training center whereby people can grow through the application of teaching and the utilization of their spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12; Eph 4).

1 Peter 4:10—*"As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another."*

No passive participants!!!! This is not a concert. It is not a satellite. It is a body where you serve.

Imperative: note that every believer has been called to full-time ministry! We all are to exercise the "one-anothers" of Scripture. Exercising one's spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:7, 11; 1 Peter 4:10—"employ gift...")

To serve (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10) and to edify the church (1 Cor 14:12, 26—gift not for self)

When we come together, it is for the purpose of equipping each other for the work of the ministry.

The General Mission of the church: The church exists to be a light in this dark world, for the evangelization of the lost (Matt 5:13-16; 28:19-20; Titus 2:11-15).

The last words of Jesus in all four gospels (and in Acts 1) is a command to take the Gospel into the world. This is why we do what we do. We love one another so the world knows the love of God. We hate sin, so we have a pure body to call someone to, and our testimony is not undercut.

Evangelism is not one thing we do. It is the primary thing we do. It is the point. We are here to glorify God, and nothing glorifies God as much as a lost sinner coming to faith in Christ.

Here is where your understanding of predestination, and God's sovereignty in salvation plays out. How do you approach evangelism? Is it focused on programs? Or is it done with the understanding that people are dead in their sin and it takes the proclamation of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit to raise them.

5. WE HAVE A BIBLICAL VIEW OF CHURCH LEADERSHIP

A correct understanding of the purpose of the church helps us to understand the importance of biblical leadership.

- a. Leaders must model the character of Christ for the flock (1 Thess. 2:4-12; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).
- b. Leaders must adequately equip their people to do the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12).
- c. Leaders must provide ample opportunity for people to do the work (Heb 10:24-25—"Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good works.")

NOTE: A failure to correctly understand biblical leadership leads to:

- Unbiblical discipleship and modeling
- Skewed ministry priorities
- The "faithful" few doing all the work
- Frustration, often producing a high turnover of lay leadership

Imperative: church leaders must equip every believer for ministry!

- a. Through the teaching the Word towards knowledge (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- b. Through discipling the Word toward obedience.
- c. Through modeling the Word towards reproduction (Luke 6:40; 1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3)
 - "Reproduction" in terms of fruitfulness
 - "Reproduction" in terms of future leaders

CONCLUSION:

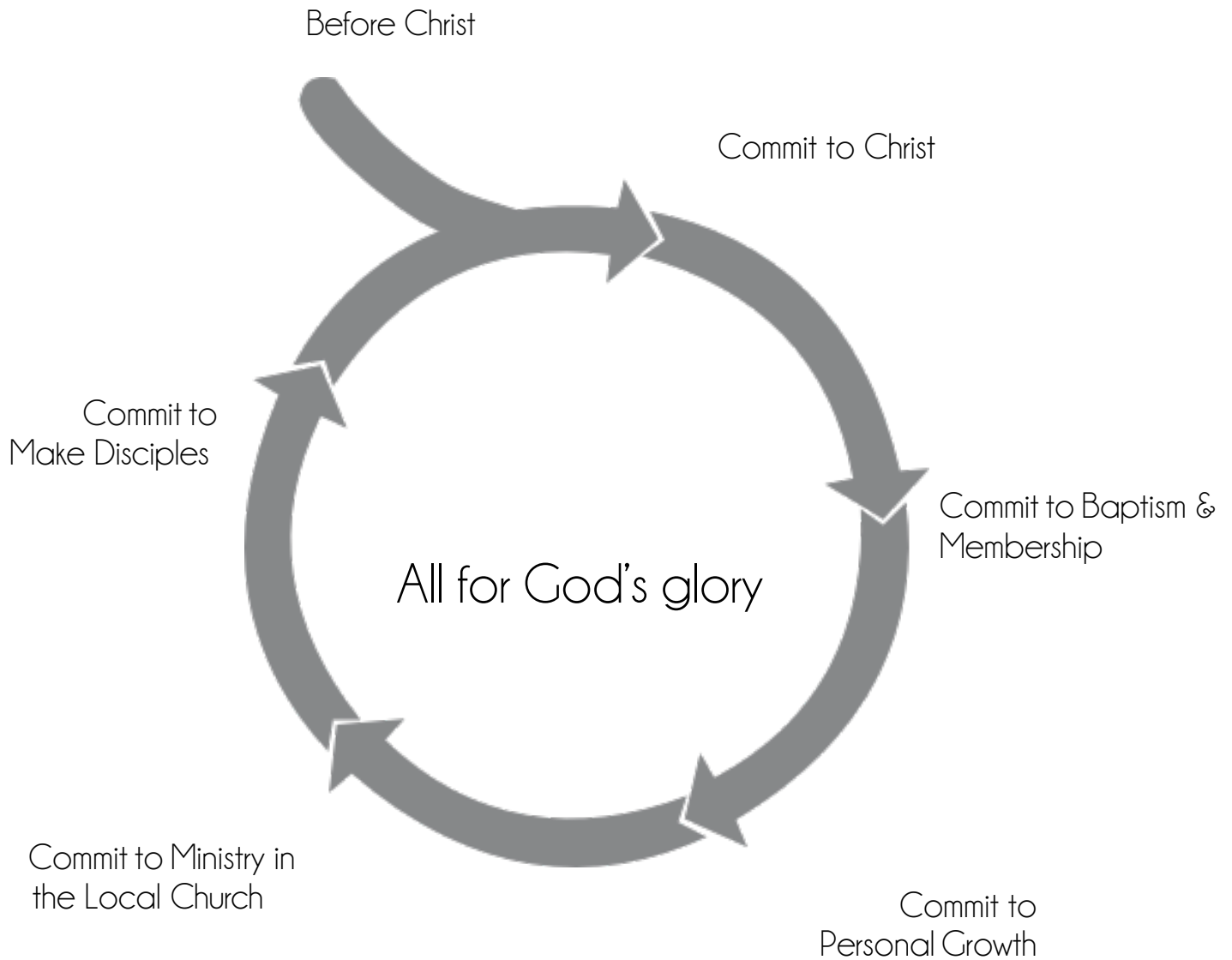
PRINCIPLES support practices, people, and programs, not the other way around.

PRINCIPLES are rooted in God, Scripture, discipleship, and the gather/scatter distinction.

GPEH DISCIPLESHIP PLAN

Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

*"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom,
so that we may present every man complete in Christ." (Colossians 1:28)*



GPEH CHURCH DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

Making Disciples Who Make Disciples

Steps for Growing Disciples

Commitment is essential to the life of a disciple (follower of Jesus), more commitment, not less. The steps provided show how one that has been transformed by Christ can grow into a healthy, reproducing disciple of Jesus. Would you be willing to go to the next step?

Evaluate where you are in the cycle. Do you know Christ as your Lord and Savior? If you do not, trusting Him would be your starting point. If you do, then read through the following steps to see where you are and what your next step should be. God will be glorified as you move forward in your spiritual journey.

Step 1—Commit to Christ

Do you know that God is perfect and holy? Do you know that your sin is what separates you from His presence? Do you know that God made a way for you to be right with Him? Only Jesus who lived a perfect life could take on the sin of the world and die as our substitute. He died where we should. But God raised Him from the dead to show victory over sin and death. Now God says that He will apply Christ's death toward our sin if we repent (turn) from our sinful ways and trust in Jesus. Is that you? When you trust Christ, God will radically change you into a new person because His Holy Spirit will come to live inside you.

AT GPEH, we have a free resource for new believers in Jesus Christ called, *Just for Starters*. This concise booklet looks at what the Bible teaches on seven fundamental topics: *Saved by God, Trusting in God, Living God's way, Listening to God, Talking to God, Meeting with God's family, Meeting the world.*

Step 2—Commit to Membership/Baptism at GPEH Church

After a person is transformed by the gospel, he/she should be baptized into a local church. Here at GPEH we believe this is an important step for your growth in Christ. During the membership journey, an individual will develop his/her personal testimony and learn the core beliefs of the Christian faith. He/she will also learn more about what it means to be part of the local church at GPEH.

Step 3—Commit to Personal Growth

Growth as a Christian is essential. Growth indicates life. We believe there are at least 2 areas where members should be ever-growing in their relationship with the Lord.

- 1. Personal Disciplines.** We emphasize the essential disciplines of Bible reading and prayer because they are so vital to your relationship with the Lord. They are called disciplines because one must set aside time to invest in them.

Bible reading: God clearly uses His Word to speak to His people and develop them into what He wants for their lives, so we must take advantage of reading God's Word. Develop a plan. Read through the New Testament every day. Read the Bible in a year. You will benefit from a plan because a plan will help set you up for successful growth. Daily progress is key.

Prayer: Speaking to God is another vital discipline for every Christian. A good place to begin is responding to the Bible reading of the day. We also have a great resource available if you would like to expand your prayer life (*Enjoy Your Prayer Life* by Michael Reeves).

- 2. Personal Holiness.** Christians often get into ruts and let sin slip into their lives. As a growing disciple, you must rid your life of sin by actively killing it in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a great time to take inventory for any sin that has crept into your life or any sin that has gone unchecked. Submit your life often to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, repent, and walk in the freedom that God offers in Christ.

We have resources available at GPEH to help you learn to mature in personal holiness. One such foundational tool would be a study of the *Put On, Put Off Principle*. Through this study of Ephesians 4:22-24 you can gain a solid footing in lifestyle repentance & personal holiness.

Step 4—Commit to Ministry in the Local Church

The local church plays a vital role in a disciple's growth. We commit to the local church because that is Jesus' plan to change the world starting right here where we live. Committing to the local church should be a part of every disciple's journey.

- 1. Attend.** Prioritizing Sunday morning worship gatherings is crucial for a disciple of Christ. God forms His people through the preaching of His Word, and Sundays are where that happens. Christians also are encouraged by other like-minded believers when they gather. We participate in the Lord's Supper as a gathered body. All of this happens on Sunday, so you should attend on Sunday mornings but not just on Sunday mornings.
At GPEH we want to offer many other avenues for discipleship. Smaller Bible study groups are great ways for you to grow as a disciple. Significant discipleship happens when we gather together through the teaching of the Word and in fellowship with other members.
- 2. Care for Members.** Our love for one another should be ever-growing. The ways one can care for other members is endless, but we want to include a few ideas. The importance of praying for one another cannot be underestimated, so we want to commit to pray for the other members. Sharing life together is another way to care for members. You could invite another member to your home, out to dinner, for a cup of coffee, etc. Many people wonder how they can get involved in the church; asking someone to lunch would be a great way to start. When members suffer, we should suffer with them. If you hear of a sickness or loss in another member's family, you may want to reach out to them with a phone call, prepare a meal, visit the hospital, or even attend a funeral. All these suggestions show a fellow member that you care about them.
- 3. Commit to Health.** We give a 26-page booklet, *Your Local Church and Why it Matters?* by John MacArthur, to all prospective members. It is a gem for anyone wanting to grow as a disciple to get ideas how you could be growing.
- 4. Serve the Church Body with Your Spiritual Gift(s).** At salvation all Christians are promised to receive a gift from the Holy Spirit to be used for the good of the body. We need you to utilize your spiritual gift, so we can be complete and whole. Without you we suffer. Some of these gifts are used during the gathering of the church on Sundays, but do not think your gift must be used only on Sunday.
- 5. Give Generously.** Paul wrote, "God loves a cheerful giver." While Paul was talking about money, God wants more than our money; He wants our heart. It is easy to see what someone values. Look at one's wallet and calendar. How one spends money and time shows where the heart is. We want to be people who give generously to the Lord through our tithes and offerings as well as our service to Him in the body of believers. All members should have "skin in the game" to see us succeed in our God-glorifying mission to make disciples of all nations.

Step 5—Commit to make disciples

Disciples disciple. Part of your obedience as a disciple is to help other Christians be obedient. Our goal as disciples is to reproduce more followers of Christ. This strategy means making new disciples (evangelism) and seeing disciples to maturity (discipleship).

1. **Evangelism.** Evangelism is telling someone of their sin before a holy God and asking them to respond by repenting of their sin and placing their trust in Christ for salvation.
Evangelism is not complete until the person is baptized and connected into a local church.

A. Personal evangelism is the most effective method of evangelism

i. **Know the Gospel.** It is impossible to be saved and not know the gospel. It is also impossible to share the gospel without knowing the gospel. We have an excellent resource called, *Two Ways to Live*, that is a perfect tool to help you learn & commit to memory the main details of the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

ii. **Develop Your Personal Testimony.** Your testimony is a powerful illustration of how the gospel of Jesus Christ can change a person. Be willing to share it even when someone does not believe the Bible to be true because your testimony is irrefutable. Changed lives are difficult to refute. "I once was lost, but now I am found in Jesus."

iii. **Write Down the Names of 3 non-Christians for whom You Can Pray.** God uses our prayers in salvation. We may never know why but we know He does. When you pray for 3 non-Christians you are asking the sovereign Lord in heaven to bring about a transformation in a non-Christian's soul. You will likely find your heart softening toward non-Christians.

iv. **Pray for Opportunities to Share the Gospel.** Be bold. Ask God to give you opportunities to share the gospel. Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you. Then seize the opportunities the Lord gives you.

v. **Invite non-Christians to Church or Church Activity.** As the Lord draws non-Christians to Himself, follow the Holy Spirit as you invite them to experience what the family of God is like.

2. **Discipleship.** Discipleship is helping other Christians follow Jesus better. While discipleship can happen in large gatherings and haphazardly, small groups with great accountability seem to be how Jesus did it (Peter, James, and John) and produce the greatest growth.

A. Disciple Others

i. **Help Other Christians Follow Jesus Better.** Helping others grow does not happen without intentionality. But who should you focus on? The world is a big place with lots of Christians. Special attention should be given to your fellow members since you have committed to them, see them regularly, and share the same values.

Pray about taking a new believer through the booklet, *Just for Starters*. This concise booklet looks at what the Bible teaches on seven fundamental topics: *Saved by God, Trusting in God, Living God's way, Listening to God, Talking to God, Meeting with God's family, Meeting the world*. You could meet with them one night a week for coffee or dinner and disciple them through the first weeks of their new life in Christ.

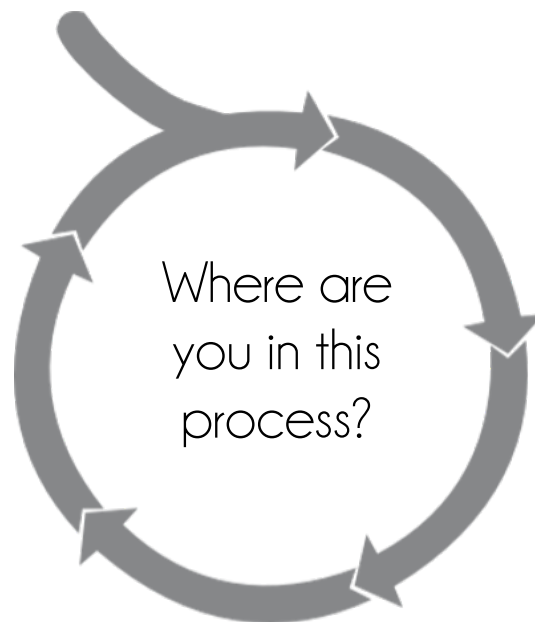
Perhaps there is another fellow believer that you could come alongside and encourage through a weekly study of *Christian Living for Starters*. This 7-study booklet covers topics including: Confident hope, Living by Faith, Loving Like the Son, Joy in Adversity, Gracious Generosity, Holiness, & Spirit-Filled Living.

ii. Be Accountable to A Member or Members. Accountability keeps us in check. Without it many fall by way of sin. We have some accountability questions available to you and recommend you ask someone to meet with you regularly to go over them. This will be for your spiritual good.

iii. Participate in a Growth Group. While we have small groups in the church a growth group is very small (3-5). We have some simple material that would be great to journey through. It takes a high commitment with great accountability but will likely be one of the greatest opportunities for you to grow as a disciple. But this group is not your end goal; forming a group that you lead will be. You know you are successful as a disciple maker when those that you disciplined are discipling others and you have "spiritual grandchildren." Then, and only then, have we succeeded, and the next generation of believers is set to follow Christ into perpetuity.

We do this All for God's Glory!

"We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose, also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." (Colossians 1:28-29)



Our Detailed Doctrinal Beliefs

The Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7 14; 2 Peter 1:20 21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12 13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15 17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20 21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20 21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16). We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12 15; 1 Corinthians 2:7 15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

GOD

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5 7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalms 145:8 9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1 31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalms 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38 47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4 6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ;

He adopts as his own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created all things according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind.

In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9). We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalms 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

1. Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
2. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46).
3. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31). We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalms 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:14).

Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15, 25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1, 19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1, 3; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalms 14:1, 3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9, 18, 23; 5:10, 12).

SALVATION

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8, 10; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3, 7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17, 21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4, 10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2, 3).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28, 30; Ephesians 1:4, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1, 2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18, 19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22, 23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls

to Himself will come in faith & all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37 40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4 7; Titus 3:4 7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11 16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25 28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6 7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9 10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1 22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16 25; Ephesians 4:22 24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9 10; 1 Peter 1:14 16; 1 John 3:5 9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37 40; 10:27 30; Romans 5:9 10; 8:1, 31 39; 1 Corinthians 1:4 8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15 22; 13:13 14; Galatians 5:13, 25 26; Titus 2:11 14).

Separation

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1 5).

We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1 2, 1 Corinthians 5:9 13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15 17; 2 John 9 11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11 12; Hebrews 12:1 2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2 12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1 2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11 14; 1 John 3:1 10).

THE CHURCH

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12 13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23 32; Revelation 19:7 8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1 21, 38 47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11 3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1 6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18 20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1 13; Titus 1:5 9; 1 Peter 5:1 5). We teach that these leaders

lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17 22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19 20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5 14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15 22; Acts 5:1 11; 1 Corinthians 5:1 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6 15; 1 Timothy 1:19 20; Titus 1:10 16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19 31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4 7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1 4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13 16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16 17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38 42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7 12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5 8; 1 Corinthians 12:4 31; 1 Peter 4:10 11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3 4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8 12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13 14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6 8). We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1 6; John 5:7 9; 2 Corinthians 12:6 10; James 5:13 16; 1 John 5:14 15).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38 42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36 39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1 11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41 42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self examination (1 Corinthians 11:28 32). We also teach that whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is

nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

ANGELS

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9 14; Hebrews 1:6 7, 14; 2:6 7; Revelation 5:11 14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12 17; Ezekiel 28:11 19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1 14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1 15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13 14; Matthew 4:1 11; Revelation 12:9 10); the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12 17; Ezekiel 28:11 19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

Death

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9 11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21 24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13 17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4 6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35 44, 50 54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10 11, 19 23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13 15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19 26; Revelation 20:13 15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28 29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11 15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41 46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41 46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7 9).

The Rapture of the Church

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1 3; 1 Corinthians 15:51 53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11 15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

We teach that following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1 3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7 12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27 31; 25:31 46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7 12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2 3; Revelation 20:4 6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24 27; Matthew 24:15 31; 25:31 46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

We teach that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31 33; Acts 1:10 11; 2:29 30) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1 7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21 28; Daniel 7:17 22; Revelation 19:11 16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17 27; Revelation 20:1 7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17 25; Ezekiel 37:21 28; Zechariah 8:1 17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15 68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1 26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31 34; Ezekiel 36:22 32; Romans 11:25 29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17 25; Ezekiel 36:33 38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10) whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10 13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11 15).

Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7 15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21 22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24 28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church Covenant

1. Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine Grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.
2. We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
3. We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.
4. We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.
5. We will endeavor to bring up those who may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.
6. We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.
7. We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.
8. We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.
9. We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.
10. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church Covenant Explanatory Notes

1

- This covenant is to be made by Christians only (“repent and believe”)
- Made by baptized Christians
- Can only be kept with God’s help (“relying on his gracious aid”)

2

- Quoting Ephesians 4:1-3 “¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- Unity doesn’t just happen . . . because churches are made up of sinners.
- We commit to not talk behind each other’s backs, to forgive each other, to give each other the benefit of the doubt, to surrender our preferences for the good of others, to be careful with each other’s reputations. We don’t major on minor issues; we are careful how we speak publicly in members meetings; we pray for one another and put on love at all times.

3

- How do we love each other? Does that mean we all have sweet feelings toward one another? Well, that feeling may well be there, but biblical love is more steadfast than that.
 - Affectionate care: practical care for each other’s physical and spiritual needs
 - Watchful: protecting each other from sin and mistakes
 - Admonishing and entreating one another: it is a loving thing to speak to me when I am struggling in sin

4

- Hebrews 10:23-25. We are commanded to meet together regularly. Of course things come up . . . but meeting together should be normal.
- When someone stops going to church, it’s generally either an indication that they’re in sin or are about to be.
- If you’re struggling, the *last* thing you should do is to avoid church.

5

- Commitment to help each other raise our children.
- Commitment to evangelize—and to help each other do so.

6

- We live in a world that is full of envy, jealousy, and greed . . . but as a church, we are called to be very different.
- Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”
- Examples of rejoicing with those who rejoice and of weeping with those who weep.
- We are not designed to go through difficulty and sorrow alone.
- We live *in* the world, but we’re not to be *of* the world.
- We need encouragement to say “no” to the world, to seek satisfaction only in Christ.
- We too often feel right at home in this world; we need each other to remember where home really is.

7

- By becoming a member here, you commit to uphold the Gospel witness in this church
 - Through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
 - Through church discipline.
 - Through giving faithfully and sacrificially of our finances.

- If you join our church, you'll own a part of the responsibility for all that goes on here – worship, evangelism, doctrine, ministry, and much more.

I mentioned the practice of church discipline. Let me say a bit more about that. Church discipline is the removal of an individual from our membership because of unrepentant sin in their lives. Essentially what is happening is that they are professing with their mouths to be in Christ, but their lives give evidence to the contrary. So out of love for them and for the reputation of Christ, we are making it clear to them, to us, and to the world around us, that this life they are living is not representative of a Christian's. They are welcome to attend here, but they may not call themselves a member of our church, and they may not take the Lord's supper with us. Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 are two chapters in the Bible that speak of this in greater detail—and you'll see a **one-page explanation of church discipline in your handout**.

Now, there are lots of sins that church discipline doesn't apply to. It's not for sin generally—that would include all of us, as churches are only for sinners. Rather, church discipline is for *unrepentant* sin. And there are lots of sins that we just can't know about. We can't discipline you for being prideful, for example.

But if you persist in sin that is serious, clear to others, and unrepentant—such as unrepentant tax evasion, for example, or persistent refusal to attend a church—we will remove you from our membership as an act of discipline.

9

- When you move from the church, resign your membership here and tell us which church you're planning on joining.

10

- The benediction with which we oftentimes will close our services.
- 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Conclusion

- How do we persevere? In community.
- Community is built of relationships that require commitment; our commitment to each other as a church begins with the promises of this church covenant.

Church Discipline and the Love of God

Do the words “church discipline” seem like they don’t belong together, like “painful friendship” or “conditional grace”? In fact, church discipline builds healthy churches and vibrant gospel witnesses.

What Is Church Discipline?

Broadly, church discipline is one part of the discipleship process. As in many areas of life, Christian discipleship involves both instruction and discipline, just like soccer practice or math class.

Narrowly, church discipline is correcting sin. It begins with private warnings. It ends, when necessary, with removing someone from church membership and participation in the Lord’s Table. The person will generally be free to attend public gatherings, but he or she is no longer a member. The church will no longer publicly affirm the person’s profession of faith.

A number of sins might call for loving warnings in private. But formal public discipline typically occurs only in cases of sin that meet three further criteria. A sin must be outward—it can be seen or heard (unlike, say, pride). It must be serious—serious enough to discredit the person’s verbal profession of following Jesus. And it must be unrepentant—the person has typically been confronted but refuses to let go of the sin.

Is Discipline Biblical?

Church discipline first shows up in Matthew 18, where Jesus says concerning the person in unrepentant sin, “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” (v. 17). That is, treat him as outside the covenant community. The person has proven uncorrectable. His life does not match his Christian profession.

Another well-known passage on discipline, 1 Corinthians 5, helps us see the purpose of discipline. First, discipline exposes. Sin, like cancer, loves to hide. Discipline exposes the cancer so that it might be cut out (see 1 Cor. 5:2). Second, discipline warns. A church does not enact God’s judgment through discipline. Rather, it stages a small play that pictures the great judgment to come (v. 5). Third, discipline saves. Churches pursue it when they see a member taking the path toward death, and none of their arm-waving causes him or her to stop. It’s the device of last resort (v. 5). Fourth, discipline protects. Just as cancer spreads from cell to another, so sin quickly spreads from one person to another (v. 6). Fifth, discipline preserves the church’s witness. Strange to say, it serves non-Christians because it keeps churches distinct and attractive (see v. 1). After all, churches are to be salt and light. “But if salt has lost its taste. . .” Jesus said, “It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Matt. 5:13).

Is Discipline Really Loving?

Church discipline at its core is about love. The Lord disciplines those he loves (Heb. 12:6). The same is true for us.

The problem is, many people today have a sentimentalized view of love: love as being made to feel special. Or a romanticized view of love: love as being allowed to express yourself without correction. Or a consumeristic view: love as finding the perfect fit. In the popular mind, love has little to do with truth and holiness and authority.

But that’s not love in the Bible. Love in the Bible is holy. It makes demands. It yields obedience. It doesn’t delight in evil but rejoices in the truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Jesus tells us that if we keep his commandments, we will abide in his love (John 15:10). And John says that if we keep God’s word, God’s love will be perfected in us (1 John 2:5). How do church members help one another abide in Christ’s love and show the world what God’s love is like? Through helping one another obey and keep his word. Through instruction and discipline.

Membership Application

CONTACT INFO:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Occupation _____

Spouse's name _____

Child	Name	/	age	/	grade
_____	_____	/	_____	/	_____
_____	_____	/	_____	/	_____
_____	_____	/	_____	/	_____

Why would you like to become a member of Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church?

Have you been baptized as a believer?

Yes, by immersion

Yes, but not by immersion

No

Are you currently under discipline in any other local church?

Yes

No

Have you been a member of any other church in the past? If so, which?

If you have been a member of another church... Please tell us about your reasons for leaving and your manner of leaving. Are you leaving your church in a manner that is above reproach? Would you be willing to ask that church for a letter of transfer?

How have you served in churches in the past?

Having read the church's statement of faith, are you in substantial agreement with the doctrine of CPEH Church? Do you have any concerns or hesitations?

Having read the membership covenant, are you in agreement with the membership commitments at CPEH Church? Do you have any concerns or hesitations?

Do you have any other questions or concerns?

Please share a brief testimony as to your salvation experience: (additional pages may be added as needed)

Membership Service Area

Name _____

Cell # _____

Email _____

Do you enjoy helping keep the building/lawn beautiful and in great shape?

1. Repairs and Maintenance
2. Cleaning
3. Decorations
4. Spray for insects
5. Mowing
6. Landscaping
7. Painting

Do you enjoy teaching, or helping with special events?

- 1 Teaching
 - a) Men
 - b) Women
 - c) Mixed
- 2 Writing (brochures, newsletters, etc)
- 3 Hosting a class
- 4 Hosting a class in your home
- 5 Planning special events
- 6 Working/serving at special events
- 7 Setting up for special events
- 8 Cleaning up after special events

Do you enjoy working with youth and children?

- 1 Teaching
 - 1 Youth
 - 2 Children
 - 3 Nursery
- 2 Planning special events for youth/children
- 3 Working special events for youth/children

Do you enjoy working with music?

Leading music

Singing in the choir

Singing solos

Singing with a small group

Playing an instrument - what?

Do you enjoy welcoming others?

Greeting

Usher

Do you enjoy setting up events and serving in the community?

Putting out door hangers

Visitation

Do you enjoy working with outreach?

Visitation

Missions

Website

Advertising

Sending Cards and letters

I AM:

- 1 A leader -
- 2 A follower -

I AM:

- 1 An idea person -
- 2 An organizer -
- 3 A worker -

Other: _____

Please check any and all in which you are interested or skilled

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Greeter | <input type="radio"/> Writing/editing |
| <input type="radio"/> Usher | <input type="radio"/> Advertising |
| <input type="radio"/> Instrumentalist | <input type="radio"/> Web design |
| <input type="radio"/> Praise Team | <input type="radio"/> Outreach and visitation |
| <input type="radio"/> Nursery | <input type="radio"/> Cards and Letters |
| <input type="radio"/> Toddler | <input type="radio"/> Nursing Home Ministries |
| <input type="radio"/> Children's Ministries | <input type="radio"/> Benevolent Ministries |
| <input type="radio"/> Teen Ministries | <input type="radio"/> Special Events |
| <input type="radio"/> Building Maintenance | |
| <input type="radio"/> Grounds Maintenance | |

Grace Point at Eagle Heights Church Covenant

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9. We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.
10. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen

Signed _____ this _____ day of _____, 2026