



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

AT WESTON

DISCOVERY CLASS

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Section 1: The Wheel that Drives the Church

“to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
– Ephesians 3:21

Welcome to First Baptist Church at Weston, where the Bible is the supreme authority for life and practice within the church. We believe the Bible is not only authoritative and sufficient for our theology, but for our methodology as well. Our desire is to be a true church that is thoroughly Biblical with a congregation that glorifies God in all that we do!

We believe that the local church must be driven to health by God and for God. The Lord will build His church His way. Therefore, we believe there are a few Driving Distinctives which must be present in every local church as prescribed and described in Scripture. We are not to build a local church around man’s felt needs or the desires of an ever-changing culture. We do not need to cater the church’s worship in efforts to bring in those who do not know the Gospel. Rather, we believe God’s Word is the sufficient source of wisdom which directs us to know how we should seek to structure the ministry of the local church. The Driving Distinctives of the Church are the biblical methods which we believe must be utilized in building God’s church. The wheel below shows these different distinctives and the work towards reforming a church to Biblical health. The wheel turns the church in the direction of a God glorifying congregation which God will use as a pattern for others.



Looking closely at the wheel, it can be explained in this simple way: Everything exists for God’s Glory, especially His Church (Eph. 3:21). Therefore, the church’s mission must be directionally focused on the glory of God. The mission of God’s glory is driven by the Holy Spirit, who enlightens and empowers every believer toward this unified goal in the church. God’s glory is

revealed in the Word of God and thereby serves as our highest authority in life. The preaching of the Word of God serves as the hub of the wheel which directs and sanctifies the church by the power of the Spirit through the Word. The preaching of the Word of God is strengthened and supported by the congregational worship of the church through the singing, reading, praying, and preaching of God's Word. From the preaching of the Word of God flows instruction and application into the various areas of the church beginning with Every Member Ministry through Small Groups. This is where theology is put into practice and the sermon is applied in the life of the church as members care for one another. The preaching of the Word is also to be carried home by every member into home-life discipleship where the Word is lived out in the context of marriage, parenting, and other home relationships. We believe strong families trained in the Word will support and strengthen strong churches. Finally, the preaching of the Word is not only lived out in small groups and in our homes, but also the world. It begins with evangelizing our neighborhoods, community, and the ends of the earth.

Everything centers on the preaching of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit as it informs us how to live to the glory of God in the church. So, if we desire to be a true church that honors God, we must understand the grand purpose of God building His church. Everything we do in the church is to be done in obedience to Scripture to the glory of God. Therefore, before we examine the how, we must understand the why. Why will God build His church? Because God will be glorified in His church and if the church isn't built His way, then He will not receive the glory that He is due.

The following pages in Section 2 further details each distinctive and how it helps drives the church to the glory of God.

Section 2: The Driving Distinctives of the Church

The Glory of God in Building His Church

If you want to grow your church, there are no shortages of ideas on how to do so. A quick internet search will tell a church to update their website, improve their social media presence, give out gifts to visitors, and a host of other innovative tips and tricks. These are not bad ideas in their own right, but the motive behind them caters the church to the desires and preferences of people, rather than to God. Their desire is to make the church more attractive to the world, instead of making the church more attractive to God. When the church is designed around the desires and preferences of the people, then God is no longer the one being worshipped, the people are.

The one who is to be worshipped is the one who dictates how He is to be worshipped. In the Old Testament, Aaron was installed as the first High Priest for the people of Israel, and his sons did not follow what God commanded in how to worship Him. In **Leviticus 10:1-3**, they thought they could do something else. They thought they had a better idea of how God should be worshipped, and God killed them for their disobedience in toying with worship.

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So, fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.'" So, Aaron held his peace.

Make no mistake; God cares how He is worshipped. So, if we desire to be a true church which honors God, we must have this foundational understanding of how God builds His church for His glory. We must understand that the centerpiece of God's program for this age, until He returns, is the church.

Ephesians 3:21 *to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

The Father's plan for the church includes an eternal purpose. God receives glory in the church, a plan that was put into motion from eternity past and will be followed through until eternity future. Therefore, the primary instrument of God for this world and all generations is the church. The church is the centerpiece of God's program in this age. Everything is to and through the church to the glory of God.

“Glory is due God ‘in the church’ because He has chosen to use her as the instrument of His purposes on this earth and for eternity. Here His Gospel is proclaimed, His Law taught, and His people are nurtured in His grace and equipped for His service of world transformation.”¹

If this is true, then the Lord will build His church, His way, to receive His rightful glory.

In **Matthew 16:15**, Peter confesses, on behalf of the Apostles, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Then, verses 18-19 Jesus goes on to say,

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Jesus is promising to build His church based upon this foundational confession that Peter just proclaimed! Even to the point of giving the church incredible spiritual power that as it is built, the church will have the keys of heaven to do the work of God here on earth as it is in heaven. Therefore, if Christ is building His church, He will be glorified in it. As you survey the New Testament, you come to see with clarity all God has done in Jesus Christ to establish His church and show just how precious it is to Him.

The New Testament teaches 4 truths about the church and how precious it is to Christ.

1) The Church is Bought by Christ

***Acts 20:28** Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

***Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her*

2) The Church is the Building of Christ

***Matthew 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

3) The Church is the Body of Christ

¹ Bryan Chapell. *Ephesians, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Pg175.

Colossians 1:18 *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.*

4) The Church is the Bride of Christ

Ephesians 5:23 *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.*

Revelation 21:9 *Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."*

Proverbs 12:4 tells us an excellent wife is the crown of her husband, that she can bring glory and honor to him. But the verse also goes on to say that a wife who brings shame to her husband is like rottenness or cancer to his bones. The wife is a representative reflection to either the glory or shame of her husband, the head of the home. The church, as the bride of Christ, can either be the crowning jewel bringing glory to Christ, or the rotting cancer, bringing shame to Christ.

That leads to the question of how can the church bring shame to Christ? That answer actually is quite simple: building the church her way.

Matthew 16:21-23 *From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."*

Peter had the right profession, but the wrong methods. Peter made the right profession of Jesus as the Christ but had the wrong mindset of how God's program would operate under Christ's rule and reign. In Peter's mind, God's kingdom program must not include the King to suffer and die. Surely, Peter had something better in mind. Peter had a better way of running God's kingdom program on earth. Peter was accused by Jesus in verse 23 of not being mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.

You see, it must be God's way, otherwise man receives the glory. All man-centered worship and methods glorifies man, and not God who created man. Whenever we are more mindful of the things of men than the things of God, we will lean on our own understanding and go our own way. Peter demonstrates the wayward thinking of many churches, applying man's

thoughts about how church should operate as equal or superior to God's divine mandate for His church to operate. There are many churches who profess to honor Christ, but by taking on man-centered methods outside of Scripture, they bring shame to Christ and rottenness to His bones.

God said He will build His church. What did He not say? God did not say He will build your church. And He did not say you would build His church. HE WILL BUILD HIS CHURCH! But He uses us in His process, as we do things His way. Man-centered gimmicks draw people in, there is no doubt about that. But if we look carefully at that, we can see how any gimmick or approach that is man centered is a rejection of the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word to give life to the church. A thoroughly Biblical church doesn't need gimmicks when she has the Spirit of God working within her!

The church is not here to entertain you, but to equip you toward obedience. The goal of the church is bringing glory to God through making disciples of God. God gives the church pastors to train and equip the church, not to entertain them.

Ephesians 4:11-12 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*

So, how does the church make disciples? What methods are used to equip the believers? If we are to do God's work, God's way, then we can simply look to Scripture to give us the proper methods of how to make and equip disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Driving Distinctives of the Church are the Biblical methods which must be utilized in building God's church, God's way. These distinctives are the main structures of disciple-making in the church as revealed in the Scriptures.

Driving Distinctive # 1

Preaching the Word in the Power of the Spirit

"...everything else ought to build to the preaching of the Word, for that is when the God of whom we have been speaking and singing speaks to us from His eternal and perfect Word." - Al Mohler

The hub of the wheel of God's church is the preaching of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2). The preacher must strive to be thoroughly Biblical. He must avoid the temptation of misusing Scripture to support a man-centered or culturally relevant message. The Biblical text must be preached exegetically in its historical and grammatical context in efforts of understanding the authorial intent which will then be able to give proper application for today's world. The pulpit is indispensable to the church's growth in knowledge, holiness, and love. It cannot and should not be replaced or diminished. (2 Timothy 3:16-4:2) The pulpit is the primary instrument which God uses to edify and equip His church. A church will rise or fall with its pulpit. Everything else in the life of the church and the family flows from the pulpit.

The preaching of God's Word is the highest form of worship in the gathered assembly. Preaching is the supreme centrality of the worship service every Sunday! If the preacher has interpreted the text correctly as God has intended for it to be understood, then it's *as if* we are hearing God speak. We believe the most Biblical approach to preaching is that of an expositional style. Expository preaching is most simply understood as explaining the text. This is what the Bible calls for and how the historical church preached. The preacher must stand in the pulpit with an open Bible and explain the meaning of the text, using a historical and grammatical hermeneutic, to arrive at how the author originally meant for that text to be understood. Most Sundays, we are preaching systematically verse by verse through various books of the Bible, methodically working our way from beginning to end.

1) Old Testament Examples of Preaching God's Word

Exodus 35:1 *Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do.*

Nehemiah 8:2-4 *So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.*

In the Old Testament, God was still giving direct revelation of His message by mediating it through chosen men. They did not yet have the completed canon of Scripture but, nonetheless, proclaimed the Word of God to those God sent to them.

2) New Testament Examples of Preaching God's Word

2 Timothy 4:1-2 *I 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, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.*

1 Timothy 4:13-15 *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.*

Acts 6:4 *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

The preaching of God's Word was of utmost importance in the early days of the church. If it carried that much significance at the beginnings of local church life, how much more should we seek to continue to focus on preaching as the pinnacle of our assembled worship? Unfortunately, preaching has taken a backseat within many of today's congregations.

Al Mohler, the president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes, "Many congregations are caught in a frantic quest for significance in worship. Churches produce surveys to measure expectations for the worship service. Would you like more music? What kind? How about drama? Is our preacher sufficiently creative in the service?" The worship service must be planned around and centered upon the faithful exposition of the Scriptures and nothing else!

The preacher should never seek to "wow" those in attendance with fancy words and quotable phrases. Rather, the preacher must be so full of the Spirit that he leans upon nothing else but the Spirit's power which results in the hearer being moved towards obedience through the preaching of the Word. Therefore, the goal in expository preaching is a changed life. This is why the preaching of the Word is to be central, for its effect will carry over into every area of the church and the Christian's life. Everything will rise or fall on the pulpit and the response to it.

While the preaching of the Word is of most importance, hearing the Word and having a proper response to it is just as important. If the congregant doesn't have a plan to apply God's Word when it is preached, then they are training themselves to be disobedient to God. To take in divine information, but not undergo the corresponding divine transformation is dangerous on a week-to-week basis. Ken Ramey, in his excellent book *Expository Listening*², explains the relationship

² Ken Ramey. *Expository Listening: A Practical Handbook for Hearing and Doing God's Word*.

of the preacher and the church member in the pew and resembles it to that of a baseball pitcher and catcher; the pitcher throws the ball down the middle, but the catcher must be ready to catch! God's Word is not meant to just inform you, but to reform and transform you into the perfect image of God. The preaching of the Word must overflow into every part of the church as well as every part of the life of the church member as far as they are willing to respond to the preached Word.

Why Do We Emphasize Expository Preaching?

Its Nature

Expository preaching is simply Biblical preaching. True expository preaching makes the point of any particular sermon the point of the specific text being preached. It is important that the passage under consideration be explained according to the intentions of the original author writing to the original audience (a grammatical-historical hermeneutic). Only after this is done, can it then be applied to daily Christian living. Therefore, the emphasis of expository preaching is the careful explanation of God's Word along with the practical application of it.

Its Result

Expository preaching is essential for both the beliefs and behavior of God's people. As the mind is engaged, the Holy Spirit takes the truth of God's Word and affects the hearts of people. This will, in turn, move their wills to action. The result of expository preaching is changed lives.

"Expository preaching demands a very different set of questions: Will, I obey the Word of God? How must my thinking be realigned by scripture? How must I change my behavior to be fully obedient to the Word?" – Al Mohler

Its Goal

The goal of the expository preacher is to allow God's Word to do its work on the listener. It is not the preacher, but God's Word that shapes a congregation of individuals who will bring God glory. As we sit under expository preaching, we expose ourselves to God's Word. When God's people do this, it must lead to a productive, powerful, and penetrating Christian life.

Driving Distinctive # 2

Congregational Worship

The secondary element surrounding the hub of the wheel is congregational worship. Congregational worship is centered on worshipping God in Spirit and in truth through the expositional preaching of the Scriptures but involves all aspects of the service such as congregational singing, the public reading of God's Word, the giving of our tithes and offerings, as well as the administration of the ordinances, all under the leadership of Biblical leaders.

Expository preaching leads to worthy congregational worship. Our worship times are the most important times we spend together as a church family. God's Word is central to our worship. We read God's Word, pray through God's Word, sing God's Word, and preach God's Word.

Congregational worship can only take place if the congregation gathers. Both the Old and New Testament teaches the same idea of what the church is. The OT Hebrew word *qāhāl* and the NT Greek word *ekklēsia* both express the same meaning: the called out assembled ones. Church only happens when those called out ones (believers) assemble together. Therefore, by definition, a true church cannot be online, by extension, or by satellite. Where there is no regular pattern of believers assembling together, there can be no local church!

Nehemiah 8:2-4 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

1 Corinthians 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church...

Understanding there are multiple elements to congregational worship, this section will clarify FBCW's position under the following headings:

1. Congregational Worship through Song
2. Congregational Worship by Giving
3. Congregational Worship in the Ordinances
4. Congregational Worship led by Biblical Leaders

Congregational Worship Through Song

We believe there are at least three guiding principles for Congregational Worship through song.

1. The Audience is our God

If God is our audience, then reverence and respect are to be the attitudes of worship.

***Ecclesiastes 5:1** Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*

The audience is not the person in the pew, or the guest who might be present, but rather it is the King of Heaven. Worship through song is not meant to draw attention to a soloist, choir, or orchestra. It is meant to be directed toward the One who alone is worthy of praise!

***Psalms 40:3** He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.*

***Ephesians 5:19** Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.*

2. The Congregation is our Voice

The most important instrument the church has at her disposal is the collective voice of the congregation. We are one voice singing worship unto God for His great character and work in our lives. The worship leader is not a worship performer. Once the congregation is being led, the leader should fade into the background. Therefore, every song we sing is to be done for the edification of the congregation, not the experience of the congregation.

3. The Truth is our Song

What we sing matters more than how we sing it. We strive for substance over style. The supreme value of music in worship is based on what it says, not how it sounds. Therefore, the content and lyrics of every song must be of biblical quality.

Music is a powerful tool that can be abused to teach bad theology. Most hymns of the past were written by theologians, not musicians. Now, much of Christian music is written by musicians, not theologians. One can measure the biblical quality of a song by reading the

lyrics. If you can read the lyrics without the melody accompanying it and it still leads you to praise God in worship, then you have biblical-rich, Scripture-saturated worship in song.

With that in mind, we strategically choose to sing historical hymns or songs written by particular churches or musical groups that we most closely align with theologically (ie. Sovereign Grace, CityAlight, Matt Boswell, Matt Papa, & The Getty's). By implication, this also means that we intentionally choose not to sing songs written by particular churches, musical groups, or artists that we believe to be in theological error at best or false teaching at worst (ie. Bethel, Jesus Culture, Hillsong, Elevation Worship, Kari Jobe, & Brandon Lake). This is important because the Bible says that music is a form of teaching (see Colossians 3:16).

If the worship in song is directed toward God, in unison with the congregation, based on the truth of Scripture, then your emotions should be provoked. You should be stirred within by the truth! Unfortunately, and way too often, Christians forsake *informed* theology for *uninformed* worship which leads to nothing more than an emotional experience. Many times, Christians forsake historic belief for exciting worship which exposes the heart of the worshipper as they are seeking a feeling in worship instead of seeking after the object of worship. If the preaching of the Scriptures is the driving force of the worship service, then our theology will be accurately informed, which will lead to a rejoicing doxology as our reaction. Scripture does not show us emotion-driven worship, but it does show us emotion-filled worship. The Bible teaches that worship involves emotions in response to biblical truth.

Psalm 33:1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.

Psalm 100:1-2 Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.

Emotions get dangerous when they become the experience, instead of the emphasis being on the truth which produces the emotions. Many churches today try to cultivate emotional responses in their worship. However, we believe that it is best to engage the mind with truth. We believe that when this is done properly, our emotions will be affected appropriately.

“Many churches are now worshipping the emotions of ‘worship’ rather than God because people are addicted to the experience. Some of the worship music today is musical and emotionally stirring, but little else. We must be concerned with the depths of God where real growth is produced, rather than the emotional candy that tastes great, yet offers no nourishment for the soul.” – Jerry Wragg

“You see, the effect of purely emotional activity is that people get a good feeling. The effect of the truth is that they worship God. Truth is always at the heart of authentic worship. Every

kind of enthusiasm or emotion that is not inseparably linked to the truth is ultimately meaningless.” – John MacArthur

Congregational Worship by Giving

The Scriptures clearly addresses the giving of our finances in numerous passages. Jesus Himself preached on issues related to money about 15% of the time. It is interesting that while Jesus spoke a lot about money, and His Word gives a lot of instruction concerning our money, we typically desire to shy away from the subject. God’s local churches have always had needs that had to be met with financial resources (the saints had needs, widows had needs, pay for elders). These financial needs were met and cared for by God’s people. The needs exist today and the method for meeting the needs is still the same!

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.*

Leviticus 27:30 *Very tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord’s; it is holy to the Lord.*

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 *The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Matthew 23:23-24 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*

Giving regularly of our finances should not be viewed as a begrudging obligation, but rather as an act of joyful worship through our efforts in being faithful stewards of the resources God has given us.

Congregational Worship in the Ordinances

The Scriptures teach of two different ordinances given to the church: believer’s baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Differing from the Catholic church, we do not call these events “sacraments” because the Scriptures do not teach that they impart any grace upon the believer. Therefore, we choose to use the word ordinance which means “a command” or “authoritative order.”

1) The Practice of Believer's Baptism

Baptism is a public profession of faith which serves as an entrance point into a local church. Baptism is not to be practiced upon an infant or young child who cannot demonstrate spiritual fruit of repentance, rather baptism is reserved only for those who have repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ alone. We do not believe baptism saves you, but rather we believe baptism is a symbol of *already* being immersed in Christ through salvation.

- a. Baptism identifies the believer as a disciple of Jesus.

Acts 2:41a So those who received his word were baptized.

- b. Baptism proclaims the believer's death to sin, self, Satan, and the world, and his resurrection to new life.

Romans 6:3-5 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- c. Baptism identifies the believer with a local church.

Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

- d. Baptism is to be completed by immersion and not by sprinkling.

Acts 8:38-39 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water...

- e. In light of the four comments above, we believe there is wisdom in waiting to baptize our children. The historical church (those who practiced believer's baptism) for at least 1,800 years waited to baptize professing children until they were later teens or even into their early 20s. Even the great Baptist pastor Charles Spurgeon waited to baptize his boys until they were 18 years old.

There is not a specific age that we wait to baptize our children. Adults and children alike, every person must have a credible testimony as well as a proper understand of the Gospel and baptism according to the Scriptures. We realize that most children are *not* going to have a radical change in life like many adults do, so we must be diligent in discerning if the child is truly born-again or if they are living to please mom and dad like a good child. There must be adequate time given to watch and examine the spiritual fruit which children begin to bear.

Therefore, we believe there is much wisdom in waiting to baptize our children. Our desire is to foster their love for Christ, the Scriptures, and the church while working with their parents to be the primary ones who disciple their child and prepare them for baptism. We do not want to give our children any type of false hope or assurance they may find in their baptism.

2) The Practice of the Lord's Supper

The night before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He installed what we know as the Lord's Supper. It is a time when the church gathers and remembers the Gospel of the cross as well as the institution of the New Covenant.

- a. The Lord's Supper leads us to worship by remembrance.

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

- b. The Lord's Supper produces healthy self-evaluation in the believer's life.

1 Corinthians 11:27-32 *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

- c. The Lord's Supper leads us to worship in anticipation.

Matthew 26:29 *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

- d. The Lord's Supper is symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. Therefore, we do not believe nor practice the Catholic teaching that the bread and juice are changed in substance into the flesh and blood of Christ (Transubstantiation). We also do not believe nor practice the Lutheran teaching that the body and blood of Christ and the bread and juice coexist in union with each other (Consubstantiation). Simply understood, the bread and juice symbolically represent the Gospel to us as we receive the elements in remembrance of what Christ has done.

Congregational Worship Led by Biblical Leaders

God has given the church two distinct offices; the office of pastor and the office of deacon. When writing letters to young Timothy and Titus (also known as the “Pastoral Epistles”), instructions were given to the church in how she is to operate. The Apostle Paul explains the different qualifications of what a pastor and deacon are supposed to be (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, also see 1 Peter 5:1-3).

1) Pastor

Below are the qualifications which every pastor must continually adhere to.

1. A pastor must be a man. (1 Tim. 2:8-14) “Paul prohibits women from doing two things: (1) teaching the men of the church; and (2) exercising authority over the men. Note that immediately following his instruction in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, that prohibits women from teaching and leading men, Paul describes the qualifications for those who oversee the local church (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Significantly, the qualifications assume a male subject. Thus, the overseer is to be ‘the husband of one wife’ and ‘one who manages his own household well’ (1 Tim. 3:2b,4a). Paul gives no suggestion of women elders in this passage.”³ In both qualification passages, it speaks exclusively with male pronouns.
2. A pastor must be blameless (1 Tim.3:2, Titus 1:6,7). The pastor must be above reproach.
3. A pastor must be devoted to his wife; one-woman man (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:2). The pastor’s marriage illustrates Christ’s love for His church—His bride (Eph. 5:22 ff.).
4. A pastor’s children must be in submission, though not perfect (Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 3:4-5). If a man does not know how to manage his own family, he will not know how to take care of God’s church. The first flock for a pastor is his own family as Pastor Daddy. A Pastor’s qualification for the church starts in his home management as he leads them up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).
5. A pastor is a faithful steward (Titus 1:7). He is a steward, a manager of God’s resources and Jesus’ flock. He takes responsibility, but not ownership.
6. A pastor must be humble — not arrogant (Titus 1:7). A pastor must constantly demonstrate the Gospel by admitting when he is wrong and assuming responsibility and restoring relationships.
7. A pastor must be gentle — not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3).
8. A pastor must be sober — not a drunkard (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3). This is not just overindulgence in alcohol but is idiomatic for any addictive behavior.
9. A pastor must be peaceful — not violent (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3).
10. A pastor must have financial integrity — not greedy for gain (Titus 1:7; 1 Tim 3:3; 1 Peter 5:3). A pastor is to be upright in his financial dealings and not accused of pursuing money over the kingdom of God.
11. A pastor must be hospitable (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). A pastor’s home is to be utilized in his ministry.
12. A pastor must be a lover of good (Titus 1:8).

³ Strauch, Alexander. *The Biblical Eldership Booklet, Restoring the Eldership to its Rightful Place in the Church*. Pg 20.

13. A pastor must be self-controlled (Titus 1:8; 1 Tim 3:2). Self-control is a characterization of *every area* of a pastor's life.
14. A pastor must be upright (Titus 1:8). He has integrity in his relationships and in how he treats others.
15. A pastor must be holy (Titus 1:8). His life is devoted wholeheartedly to Jesus externally and internally.
16. A pastor must be able to teach (Titus 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2). All the other qualifications listed by Paul are character qualities. This is the only ability-based requirement. He is to be able to teach as well as defend sound doctrine, not just be able to communicate in an excellent manner.
17. A pastor must be spiritually mature (1 Tim 3:6).
18. A pastor must be respectable (1 Tim 3:7). This does not mean that everyone will like him or even appreciate him. It means there is no credible witness to ongoing, sinful behavior.
19. A pastor must be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).

Below are the different responsibilities of Biblical pastor.⁴

1. Lead the church of God (1 Tim. 5:17)
2. Exercise oversight: manage & supervise (1 Peter 5:2)
3. Teach the people God's Word (1 Tim. 3:2, 2 Tim. 2:2, Titus 1:9)
4. Equip and prepare the saints for Christian ministry (Eph. 4:11-12)
5. Labor in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17)
6. Model Christian leadership (1 Peter 5:3)
7. Shepherd, that is, pastor the whole church (1 Peter 5:2): feed, protect, lead, and heal (Acts 20:28)
8. Judge doctrinal disputes (Acts 15:2-30; 16:4; 21:20-25)
9. Guard the church from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31)
10. Care for the church of God (1 Tim. 3:5)
11. Help those within the church who are weak (Acts 20:35)
12. Pray for the sick and anoint them with oil (James 5:14-15)
13. Lay hands on certain gifted individuals (1 Tim. 4:14)
14. Handle church finances (Acts 11:29-30; 1 Peter 5:2)
15. Represent their local church to other churches (Acts 11:30; 15:4, 22-23; 21:18-19)
16. Held accountable by God the Father (Heb.13:17)

The New Testament consistently affirms that the church is to be led by a plurality of elders. Synonymously found in the Scriptures, the pastor is also known as an elder, shepherd, bishop, or overseer. Each elder has the same authority, honor, and responsibility. One elder is *not* elevated higher than another. Many modern churches are operating by a different standard. These churches have one pastor who calls all the shots, while having the other pastors execute his model and desires for how the church should look. This model is based off a secular CEO model that most corporations are governed by. This is not what the Scriptures teach!

⁴ Strauch, Alexander. *Paul's Vision for the Deacons, Assisting the Elders with the Care of God's Church*. Pg 48.

The Bible teaches a plurality of godly pastors/elders leading the church. The word *presbyteros* (Greek word for elder) almost always occurs in the plural when used in the New Testament (Acts 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 20:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14). The few exceptions occur when a Biblical author applies the term to himself (1 Peter 5:1, 2 John 1, 3 John 1). The other exception is when an individual elder is being singled out from the larger group (1 Tim. 5:19). Paul established multiple elders in each church he planted and told others to do the same (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:17, Titus 1:5). A Biblical church is to be led by a plurality of Biblically qualified elders who are equal in all aspects of the ministry yet are gifted in various ways which complement each other in a way that will best serve and shepherd the church.

Wisdom Principles of a Plurality of Elders:

- A church that is governed by a plurality of godly elders enjoys all the divinely intended benefits including their combined knowledge, wisdom, and experience.
- A church that is governed by a plurality of godly elders provides a wealth of counsel for shepherding the flock (Prov. 11:14, 15:22).
- A church that is governed by a plurality of godly elders safeguards the congregation from the self-serving preferences of a single individual (3 John 9).
- A church that is governed by a plurality of godly elders demonstrates a unity which reflects having the same mind of Christ and guided by the same Spirit (1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:3, Phil. 1:27, 2:2).
- A church that is governed by a plurality of godly elders ensures accountability among the elders (Gal. 6:1, Prov. 27:17, Eccles. 4:9-12)

While the office, honor, privileges, and responsibilities are equal for the Biblical elder, individual roles are uniquely based on the giftedness of each individual. Within the group of elders, some will be given a more visible or vocal role in leadership, but none are spiritually superior to the others (1 Pet. 5:1).

2) Deacon

Deacons have a crucial role in the life and the health of the local church, but their role is different from the elders'. The Biblical role of deacons is to assist the elders by taking care of the physical and temporal concerns of the church so that the elders can concentrate on the ministry of the Word to the flock. As Alexander Strauch says in his work on deacons, "The deacons work directly at helping the elders, relieving them of certain administrative and pastoral tasks."⁵ The deacons come alongside the pastors to do whatever is needed to relieve the pastors of certain tasks so they can keep focused on the ministry of the Word. Therefore, deacons are the qualified and approved assistants to the pastor-elders. The Greek word *diakonoi* describes who deacons are

⁵ Ibid. Pg 76.

and what their function is. This particular word doesn't just assume that deacons serve the church where needed, but rather they assist the overseers of the church where deacons are needed.

The deacons' qualifications can be found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Like the qualifications of the pastor-elder, the text gives evidence that this office is reserved for men only. And although many of the qualifications are the same or very similar to that of the pastor-elder, there are some notable differences. Perhaps the most noticeable distinction between elders and deacons is that the deacon does not need to be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Deacons are called to "hold" to the faith with a clear conscience, but they are not called to "teach" that faith (1 Tim. 3:9). This suggests that the deacons do not have an official teaching role in the church.

Without the fulfillment of these two offices of pastor and deacon, there is no true church.

3) Women in Ministry

It must be noted at this point, though men and women are equal in essence (Galatians 3:28), it does not, however, remove all differences in responsibilities given to men and women. The differences that we see between the two genders complement each other. With that in mind, First Baptist Church at Weston thoroughly affirms the doctrine of complementarianism. This is clearly seen in the marriage relationship as the husband's roles are different than the wife's roles, yet each other's roles complement each other.

Concerning the offices prescribed to the church and explained above and in light of affirming the doctrine of complementarianism, FBCW thoroughly believes that God has assigned the office of pastor and deacon *exclusively* to men only. While each gender is necessary for successful and meaningful ministry, each gender has specific roles in how they operate within the church.

To the glory of God, this does not mean that women cannot minister within the church. Women are vital to effective ministry within the church! She can have an incredible ministry with other women and children (Titus 2:3-5; 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:14-15) as well as leading in different ministries within the church (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:1-3; Acts 9:36, 16:14-15; Romans 16:1-2, 6). The church could not operate well without the role in which women serve!

Driving Distinctive # 3

Every Member Ministry Through Small Groups

Small groups play an integral role in the process of discipleship which God has called our church to. In fact, Every Member Ministry Through Small Groups is the second most important component of our disciple-making process here at FBC Weston. Small groups are the strategy organizing all individuals to accomplish a ministry of care to one another.

If we are to be serious about discipling and caring for the people of the church, then we must be serious about the means to achieve that result. So that leads us to the question:

What exactly are small groups?

Small Groups are an extension of the larger church to provide shepherding love, application of the Scriptures, accountability, and intimate fellowship where every member is cared for.

Our desire is to see the entire church cared for. But when there is a large amount of people that are part of the local church, the mission of caring for them individually becomes a daunting task. Therefore, we seek to accomplish this mission of care by breaking the larger church into smaller and more manageable groups.

We see this principle in action with Moses. Moses alone was responsible for speaking and teaching God's Law to the people of Israel. What we learn in Exodus 18 is that the task was too great for just one man. Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, observed Moses trying to minister to the entire group of people and said to him,

The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. – Exodus 18:17-18

The task of ministering and caring for the entire congregation is too much for just one pastor, or even the entire pastoral staff! So, what is the remedy? What did Jethro tell Moses to do? Jethro told Moses to continue leading the people, teaching them the Word of God, and he said,

you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter that they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. – Exodus 18:21-22

Take the larger group, break them down into smaller groups, and set over them godly leaders who will shepherd them alongside of you. This is the model! The mission of seeing the entire church cared for is accomplished in small groups! This was the model of both Jesus as well as the early church.

Luke 6:12-13 *Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles*

Acts 2:46 *So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,*

So what are the details of how the group operates? The entire small group ministry focuses on 8 goals in order to accomplish this great task of ensuring every member is cared for.

- 1) Small Groups extend shepherding care, love, and oversight

1 Thessalonians 2:6-12 *Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.*

- 2) Small Groups cultivate stronger accountability with other members of the group

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 *Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.*

- 3) Small Groups provide opportunities to study, discuss, and practically apply the Word of God

Acts 2:42 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

- 4) Small Groups encourage every member to care for one-another

1 Peter 3:8-9; 4:7-11 *Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing...But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Philippians 2:2-4 *fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

- 5) Small Groups present the ability to pray with & for other believers

James 5:16 *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Acts 1:14 *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

- 6) Small Groups give opportunities to develop spiritual leaders

2 Timothy 2:2 *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

*(for further study, please see **Luke 6:12-16; 8:1-3**)*

- 7) Small Groups support intentional (multi-generational) relationships for discipleship

Titus 2:1-10 *But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the*

word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 *But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

8) Small Groups foster evangelism and outreach to the community

Matthew 28:18-20 *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Mark 16:15 *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*

When these goals are met, then the model which Jethro told Moses to implement is accomplished. Not only that, something sweet happens within that group. It provides a freedom of fellowship among the group. This fellowship leads to a spiritual bonding together of those individuals within that small group. When spiritual bonding occurs, a desire to meet deep individual needs will become evident. The group can then help each other repent of sin (Matthew 18:15-17) and overcome specific sin which continues to have a foothold in their lives (Galatians 6:1). The group will help each other during times of physical and spiritual crisis (James 2:15-16). The group can help each other during a time of bereavement and sorrow (1 Corinthians 12:26). A group which has bonded together can more easily stir each other up to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The truth is, we were saved and placed in the church because we need each other. Just as every organ and member of the body is dependent on the others for the body to function properly, so the church is dependent on every individual doing their part to function properly and give God the glory.

Your small group is the center of your ministry to our church. Many churches are going a mile wide and an inch deep by building through events. God designed His church to build His people not through events, but through other people. Believers discipling and ministering to other

believers as we build one another up in the life of the church. Small groups are the vehicle through which the church cares for itself.

Driving Distinctive # 4

Home-Life Discipleship

Home-life discipleship is a critical element to a healthy and Biblical church. If you want to know why this is important, just look at the world we live in. Specifically, look at the current climate of our country. What is driving the wickedness and evil in our nation? The young people. And with increased connectivity through social media, young people can connect with anyone and influence one another through various platforms, exposing themselves to new ideas. Within the public school system, there is indoctrination towards ungodly ideologies, gender confusion and an emphasis on sexual identity as well as the expression of it.

It used to be where you could shelter your children from much of the sexual revolution and the ideologies that accompany it. Those days are gone as the pervasiveness of the culture has crept into every part of life. The need for godly families has never been higher and it all begins with discipleship in the home. Husbands and fathers being serious about spiritually leading their homes. Fathers and mothers being serious about discipling their children. Either you disciple your children toward godliness, or the world will disciple them towards wickedness. While you may wait, the world will not.

God's Word is very clear concerning home-life discipleship. In **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**, we find 4 imperatives for godly discipleship in the home.

“Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our God, the *LORD* is one! You shall love the *LORD* your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

1) You Must Know God Accurately (v.4)

Everything is built on a proper understanding of your knowledge and view of God.

2) You Must Love God Sincerely (v.5)

This love that you have for your God must be all-consuming. It is a love which is from the heart, based on the truth of what you know of God, and it overflows into every area of your life. The mind/heart/soul is the inner thoughts, intentions, motives, and affections. Your strength is the outward manifestation of those thoughts, motives and affections through words, actions, and deeds.

3. You Must Treasure God's Word Intimately (v.6)

Whatever is most important and precious to you, you keep close. However important and precious you view God's Word is how close you will keep it in your heart and mind.

4. You Must Teach God's Word Intentionally (v.7-9)

The command is to teach these truths of knowing God accurately, loving God sincerely, and treasuring God's Word intimately to their children.

When are they doing this? Verse 7. They shall talk of them when you...

- Sit in your house (*when you are home*)
- Walk by the way (*when you are outside of the home*)
- Lie down (*before you go to bed*)
- Rise up (*when you wake up*)

You'll notice it does not give explicit times of day, but to communicate all day long. From sunup to sundown, wherever you are, and whenever you have the opportunity, teach your children a right view of God and show them a sincere love for God. As they get older you can really lean into the inner, driving thoughts and motivations about why we do things. While they are younger it is teaching them the rules and principles, and as they get older it is about the motivations and mindsets behind those rules and principles. While they are younger it is about teaching them how to obey your decisions, and as they get older it is about teaching them how you make your decisions so they learn how to make their own decisions as it reflects what the Bible says, both explicitly and implicitly.

Implications:

1. *Home-life discipleship is not restricted to a certain time, method, or format.*

Scripture commands home-life discipleship to be done, but it does not say the exact methods to utilize and the schedule to be followed. Just that it needs to happen with intentionality and consistency. Some parents lead a formal time of family worship, as detailed below, while others regulate their home-life discipleship to a much more informal approach. Bottom line—home-life discipleship must permeate the totality of home life.

2. *Home-life discipleship is essential to obey God as He builds His church.*

What happens if we don't take this charge seriously? Take it from the people who were given the command in Deuteronomy 6. **Judges 2:10-13** records what happened with the next generation:

When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel. And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

The people of Israel did not heed the charge of Deuteronomy 6 and the results are a future generation which does not know God, and worship evil instead.

3. *Home-life discipleship is the primary responsibility of the parents and not to be outsourced to any other individual or institution.*

God has given parents the responsibility to be the primary disciplers of their children. No one is more qualified and capable than parents of reaching their children. Therefore, at FBC Weston, our Children's Ministry and Student Ministry are here to come alongside parents to help them and reinforce what they must be doing at home. However, it is not here to replace the parent in their work. That would be against God's design for the church and for the home.

4. *Home-life discipleship starts at the church and then flows into the home.*

It is true that parents are the primary disciplers of their children, but we must not diminish the importance of the church. Therefore, we must bring the church home with us each and every week. Our goal is to become a "church-integrated family" and fill our house with God's church. We should strive to have the church spill over into our home. On Saturday evenings, we should read with our children the text that will be taught the next morning at church. We should then turn around and discuss the Sunday sermon throughout the week. Why? Because it helps the family to develop a high view of the preaching of the Word and it helps the family to consistently apply the sermon.

This can only happen when the family prioritizes the church above all other institutions. Parents must teach that there is no sporting event, activity, or opportunity that is more important than God and His church. Sometimes hard decisions must be made concerning the calendar of the family, but choosing anything else over church will teach our children that there are other things more important than church.

5. *Home-life discipleship must be "incarnational."*

Our goal is to communicate with our children about why we should love God, right? But what if we are not making it real within the home? In other words, what would happen if we were speaking out of both sides of our mouth— teaching that we should love God but displaying with our lives that we don't truly love Him? The answer is obvious. Therefore, the earnest pattern of home-life discipleship is to make it real, to make it tangible, and to truly live out what we are teaching. Home-life discipleship must be incarnational.

6. *Home-life discipleship does not guarantee the salvation of children.*

Salvation is not a formula. Ephesians 2 says salvation is a gift of God, by faith, not a work lest anyone can boast. Unfortunately, many parents are operating on a false presumption that it is by their works their children can be saved. Parents may not explicitly say, “I should have done something better” or “I should have done more,” but rather it is heard frequently as the parents imply the reasons as to why their grown children have rejected God. This reveals an underlying belief in salvation by works, not by the child, but by the parents.

The goal is not to raise Christian children, for salvation does not belong to us. We have no power to save our children. Therefore, the goal must be to raise biblical children, meaning we raise our children according to biblical commands, principles, and examples; to be faithful unto what God has called you to do.

Parents cannot determine their children’s salvation, but they can influence them with the truth of God’s Word, the Gospel, and a godly life which matches their profession at home. God has to do the work through His Word.

Family Worship

Worshiping as a family during the week is a much easier task to complete than what most think it is. Family worship can be 10-15 minutes or less where three elements are present.

- 1) **Bible:** Read chapter by chapter and verse by verse. Younger children benefit greatly from good storybook Bibles that are colorful and engaging. Older children can open their own copies of God's Word and follow along as you read, or even take turns reading. While reading, take a few moments to explain how your family can apply those specific verses.
- 2) **Sing:** Some families have songbooks. Some families have musicians. Some families sing without musical accompaniment. Others sing with YouTube or Spotify. However your family chooses to do it, sing praises to the Lord! You can sing songs from Sunday morning, Scripture memory songs, or even teach your children older hymns which have been sung throughout the generations.
- 3) **Pray:** An adult should typically pray during this time as a way of modeling how to pray, but as children grow older, they can be included to pray as well. Families can use a prayer list if desired, pray to God about the Scripture that was read, or simply just speak to the Lord about what comes to mind.

Three Key Reminders When Leading Family Worship

Consistency. Aim to have a consistent time of worship at home during the week. The time of day will be different for each family (some choose the breakfast table while others choose the dinner table). If you maintain *regular consistency*, your family should begin to expect family worship to take place around the same time each day.

Flexibility. Be mindful of how your children are doing and if they are falling asleep or totally disengaged. Exercise grace and wisdom at this point, there is no reason to get frustrated. If children begin to argue or play and it seems like all is lost, be *flexible* (and wise) enough to know when the window is closed and try again tomorrow. Remember, they are children! Every family must be flexible when it comes to worshipping together at home, just be careful to not allow your flexibility to lead to inconsistency.

Incarnational. While there is a time and place for a formal time of family worship, you must remember that as you teach your children to love God, you must love Him yourself! When you deeply love the Lord, your children will see your model. When you deeply love the Word of God, your children will see it. As you formally teach your children, don't forget to make it real and incarnational.

Recommended Resources

Storybook Bibles

- The Gospel Storybook Bible by Marty Machowski
- The Beginner's Gospel Story Bible by Jared Kennedy
- The Big Picture Story Bible by David Helm
- The Biggest Bible Storybook by Kevin DeYoung

Family Worship Study Books

- Long Story Short by Marty Machowski
- Old Story New by Marty Machowski
- The Ology by Marty Machowski
- WonderFull by Marty Machowski
- Listen Up by Marty Machowski
- Wise Up by Marty Machowski
- Everything a Child Needs to Know About God by Kenneth Taylor
- Everything a Child Needs to Know About Prayer by Kenneth Taylor
- Family Worship Bible Guide by Joel Beeke
- Big Truths for Young Hearts by Bruce Ware

Gospel Saturated Stories & Allegories

- Sammy and His Shepherd by Susan Hunt
- The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan (updated by various authors)
- Don't Blame the Mud by Marty Machowski
- Zoe's Hiding Place by David Powlison
- Jax's Tail Twitches by David Powlison
- Buster Tries to Bail by David Powlison
- Gus Loses His Grip by David Powlison
- Caspian Crashes the Party by Ed Welch
- Buster's Ears Trip Him Up by Ed Welch
- Henry Say's Goodbye by Ed Welch
- Halle Takes a Stand by Paul David Tripp
- The Priest with Dirty Clothes by RC Sproul
- The King Without a Shadow by RC Sproul
- The Prince's Poison Cup by RC Sproul
- The Barber Who Wanted to Pray by RC Sproul
- The Knight's Map by RC Sproul
- The Donkey Who Carried a King by RC Sproul
- The Lightlings by RC Sproul
- I Believe in Jesus by John MacArthur
- That Little Voice in Your Head by Andrew David Naselli

Driving Distinctive # 5

Local Church Centered Missions

What missions work is the church to engage in? There are thousands of opportunities for good to be done in this world and while we can do many good things in this world, the Scriptures teach there is a foremost priority which the church is called to give attention to in missions work.

The Scriptures teach that missions is to flow from churches, to churches, and through churches to the glory of God. Therefore, all mission work the church is to be involved in is to be local church centered. A healthy and true church will support and produce more healthy and true churches across the world. We must remember, God's kingdom program for this age is the church, so everything we do in missions must flow to and through the local church.

Below is a survey of local church centered missions found in the historical New Testament book of Acts which vividly displays the method of the Great Commission to go and make disciples as the local church builds and supports other local churches.

The entire outline of Acts is found at the very beginning of the book.

Acts 1:8 *But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

You shall be my witnesses in...

- Jerusalem (1:9-8:3)
- Judea & Samaria (8:4-12:25)
- End of the Earth (13:1-28:3)

Jesus gives the mandate, tells his disciples they will receive the Holy Spirit, and then we see the methods begin to unfold. What are the methods we find?

- 1) Preach the Gospel
- 2) Make Disciples
- 3) Plant Churches

Acts 2 – The Holy Spirit comes with power upon the disciples, just as Jesus promised. Peter preaches the sermon at Pentecost and thousands are converted. Peter preached the Gospel, disciples were made, and the first local church was born. The first thing God did in His Great Commission mandate was establish His church. Everything will now flow through this church at Jerusalem.

Acts 4 – Benevolence needs are met by the church to one another.

Acts 5 – Church discipline of Ananias and Saphira happens for lying to church leaders and the Holy Spirit, and the whole community feared their God.

Acts 6 – Deacons are established to help with food distribution of widows in the community.

Acts 8 – Saul led the charge concerning the persecution of the church when he went house to house (House is a reference to the Church in Acts. The early church didn't have formal buildings like we do today but rather met in homes at their initial formation). Those who were scattered preached the Word as they went. Peter and John were sent once the Word of God had spread to Samaria. Sent from where? From the church at Jerusalem. The hub was sending out helpers to strengthen and assist where the Gospel was spreading.

Acts 9 – Saul is converted and becomes the “chosen vessel” of missions for the Lord and eventually joins disciples at Jerusalem as he goes back to the hub of all the missions work. What we find next is that the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were multiplied.

Acts 11 – Scattered persecution reached Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. The Jerusalem church receives word and sends Barnabas to Antioch to strengthen the church. Barnabas seeks out Saul to help in the mission of strengthening the church in Antioch where they eventually will spend a year with this local church.

Acts 13 – Saul and Barnabas are commissioned for service by the Spirit through the laying on of hands by the elders of the local church in Antioch.

Acts 14 – Paul & Barnabas appointed elders in EVERY church. This was not just a one time deal in Acts, Paul will leave Titus in Crete and charge him in Titus 1 to appoint elders in every city of Crete which presumes there were already churches established, they just needed godly leadership leading them. Paul and Barnabas return to the churches found in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen them. Once they returned to their “home church” in Antioch, they gave reports of their work to the church.

Acts 15 – Disputes over doctrine are taken to the church in Jerusalem for discussion. Afterwards, Paul and Barnabas were “sent off” to check on the brethren of the local churches once a conclusion was made. Later, Paul and Silas went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches they visited.

Acts 16 – Churches in Derbe & Lystra are strengthened by Paul and Silas.

Acts 18 – Paul spends a year and a half with the church in Corinth.

Acts 19 – Paul spends two years with the church in Ephesus where “All in Asia heard the Word of the Lord” (19:10).

Acts 20 – The church in Troas worshipped together on the Lord’s Day as Paul encouraged them through the preaching of the Word. Upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul asks for the elders of the church so he may encourage them.

Acts 21 – On his way to Jerusalem, Paul stops in multiple cities (Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea) and visits with the brethren of the churches. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Paul gives a report of God’s work to Gentiles to the church.

Acts 22-27 – Paul is arrested and begins his trials. His involvement with the churches becomes localized in Rome (28:30-31) as well as varying letters which are being sent out to pastors and churches.

What conclusions can be formed from the New Testament Model for how church missions is to be done?

1. ***The Great Commission is local church centered missions.*** It flows from churches, to churches, and through churches. It all centers in and around the local church. From missionaries being sent out to plant and strengthen churches, to reports being brought back to the church from these missionaries, and disputes being settled by the church. The pattern we see in the book of Acts regarding the Great Commission is that all of the evangelism and making disciples would culminate in the church. We see discipleship, food distribution, and material needs were met through faithful members of churches, NOT outside organizations or institutions.
2. ***Local church centered missions focuses on planting churches and strengthening churches.*** All of the believers were evangelizing wherever they went. As they were dispersed through persecution, the Gospel went with them, and the power of God worked through His Gospel. As there were new converts, churches were established. As church plants started out, mature churches (like the church in Jerusalem) came alongside these church plants to strengthen them.

You see, there are many good things the church can do in the world; educational missions, medical missions, sports missions, community missions. These are good and noble works. However, the main focus of the church in missions is to equip faithful pastors, plant new churches with that pastor, and then strengthen and build up existing local churches. What you see in the New Testament is believers in the church using what they have to help each other, and then also helping those around them in the world.

Section 3: Belonging to the Family

Membership Matters

There are many who do not understand the point of church membership. Why does it matter? Why can't I just come and attend, why is there a need to formally join? As always at this church, we don't take our cues from the world, but from the truth of God's Word.

Church membership is a local body of believers joining in a covenant community for teaching, prayer, service, accountability, and mutual edification. Church membership is a commitment to Christ through a commitment to each other.

But where do we find church membership in the Bible? When people look for membership in the Bible, they are looking for a club or organization to join, which they won't find. If you search through the pages of the Bible, you won't find a specific chapter and verse stating, "thou shalt be a member of a local church." You won't find such a command, because anything other than committing yourself to your local church was foreign to the New Testament. Because, while it is not found explicitly, the understanding of a committed church community flows throughout the entire New Testament.

While there are multiple examples that we could point to, for the purpose of this book we will highlight the 4 clearest indications of church membership that we have in the New Testament.

1. **The Practice of the Early church**

The book of Acts records the history of the early church. It provides rich insight into how they conducted themselves and how they operated. We find some fascinating details as we first fly over this early church record. As you read through the book of Acts, you can't help but notice the church was meticulously detailed in its ministry and record keeping.

Acts 1:15 *And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)*

Acts 2:41 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

The early church kept lists of their members and their specific needs. Acts 6 records complaints coming to the disciples because there were widows being neglected in the daily distribution of food. So, the disciples set aside qualified men to coordinate these efforts. We see a similar list of caring for widows show up again in 1 Timothy 5:9-13 where Paul gives specifics about who should be enrolled in widow care.

The early church recorded the transfer of a member if they moved to another city and provided a letter of recommendation to take to their new church.

Acts 18:27 *And when he (Apollos) desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace*

Romans 16:1-2 *I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.*

Galatians 2:9 *records the early church leaders receiving Paul, helping discern Paul's spiritual state, and then sending him and Barnabas out as missionaries.*

2. The Priority of the Assembly

Hebrews 10:24-25 *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

The author states we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. This strongly implies there is a local community of believers that every believer must commit to belonging to. Otherwise, it wouldn't matter where you assembled, as long as you were assembling with other believers.

3. The Prescription to Pastors

1 Peter 5:2 *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly*

What is the qualification given to pastors? To shepherd the flock of God *which is among you*. Meaning, pastors only have responsibility and authority given by God in the church that God has placed them in. The pastors of FBC Weston do *not* have the responsibility to shepherd the church down the street. Rather, the responsibility of the pastors is to shepherd those at this church. This is the role of pastors, but there is also the role of members to their pastors.

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

In this verse, there are 2 questions raised which point towards church membership.

1. If you are to obey and submit to your rulers (pastors), how do you know who to submit to if you don't belong to a local church?
2. Pastors will give an account for the souls of those whom they care for. How am I supposed to know who I am responsible for?

The pastor gives account to the Lord for those who have committed themselves to his church and are willing to receiving teaching, instruction, care, and correction. What if a member of the church does not receive instruction and correction but goes the way of sin? The New Testament teaches how church membership is even revealed through the picture of Church Discipline.

4. The Picture of Church Discipline

Matthew 18:15-17 records what is known as church discipline. A method that is practiced at FBC Weston though not commonly practiced in many churches today? Why not? It holds members accountable for the unrepentant sin in their lives and it's difficult.

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Church Discipline is laid out as a four-step process:

Step 1 – When a member sins, he is to be confronted privately by a fellow believer in the church.

Step 2 – If the sinning person refuses to repent, that individual is to take one or two other believers with them to confront the sinning person.

Step 3 – If the sinning individual refuses to listen to the two or three it is brought to the church.

Step 4 – If there is still no repentance, the final step is to put the person out of the church.

We see a situation like this presented in 1 Corinthians 5:1-12, where there is an individual in the Corinthian church who committed a grievous act of sexual immorality. And Paul tells the church in verse 2.

1 Corinthians 5:2 *And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.*

Paul says to remove this man who was in unrepentant sin. Here is the question regarding membership: How can you put someone out of something if they are not in it? You can only remove someone if they belonged to begin with. This implies a committed community of members in the church. Those who want to commit to gathering together to worship God. Those who are committed to God and one another to care for each other. And those who are

committed to the leadership of the church, to help hold them accountable for sin in their lives, and to bring correction where needed.

If membership is a Biblical doctrine found in the New Testament, what should the church's responsibility be towards it? We must prioritize church membership to be faithful to Scripture. This is ultimately what it comes down to: do we want to be faithful to Scripture or not? Is the word "membership" in the New Testament? No. Are the principles of membership found over and over again in the New Testament? Yes.

Jesus died for His church, and He promised to build His church. If Jesus is that committed to the church, why should we be any less committed? If we are true followers of Christ, we will love what Christ loves, and therefore, we will love the church for which He died. And the church which He continues to build today.

Section 3: Belonging to the Family

Covenant Commitments

If membership is a Biblical doctrine, then what is required of those who become members of a congregation? What are they committing to? This section deals with the covenant agreement that every new member of FBC Weston signs.

First of all, what is a covenant? A covenant is simply a promise. It's an agreement. FBC Weston's covenant contains 5 overarching commitments, with some descriptions under each one (see Appendix B). Each of these covenant commitments are a responsibility and duty of a Christian in general, but the covenant commitment ensures that the church member is held accountable to obey them.

"...membership is not simply the record of a statement we once made or of affection toward a favorite place. It must be the reflection of a living commitment or it is worthless." - Mark Dever

1. I will protect the unity of my church

- *by acting in love toward other members*

The committed community is focused on love for others in the community. It stems from the love of God which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And we show our love to others as He first loved us.

1 Peter 1:22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,*

This love is not a passive love, but an active love. A love which proactively seeks to preserve peace and build others up.

Romans 14:19 *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

The love which 1 Corinthians 13 calls us to be, love is patient, kind, does not boast, does not envy, and so on. This is the attitude that is required towards others in the church and it follows in actions of care.

- *by refusing to gossip*

You protect the unity by using your tongue for edification, not destruction. James 3 talks about the power of the tongue and how with the same tongue we can praise God one minute and curse Him another.

Ephesians 4:29 *Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

Our words are opportunities. Opportunities to bless or curse. Opportunities to strengthen or weaken. Opportunities to unify or divide. It's one thing to focus so much on not sinning with the tongue, but do you use this instrument God has given you to encourage others and build them up?

- by following the pastors and leaders

Hebrews 13:17 *Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

The exhortation is to follow the leadership of the church because the pastors have a special interest in caring for you as they will give an account for how they have guarded and cared for your soul. This pertains to the confines of the membership of the church. Those who have agreed to submit to the pastors receive the care and correction when needed.

2. I will share the responsibility of my church

The church is not simply something you attend, but is a mutual effort which you engage in. Sharing in the responsibility of the church means that no one is on the sidelines, we are all on the ministry field working together.

- *by praying for its growth*

Not just praying for growth numerically, but growth spiritually.

Philippians 1:9-11 *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

- *by caring for others in the church*

This is taking the obvious opportunities to bear the burdens of others when they arise.

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

Galatians 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

We are to do good to all, but especially our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. You care most for the family of God.

- *by warmly welcoming those who visit*

Showing up a few minutes early and looking for someone you haven't seen before and going and introducing yourself. Instead of leaving right afterwards, taking some time after the service to say hello to someone you don't know the name of.

3. I will serve the ministry of my church

- *by discovering my gifts and talents*

1 Peter 4:10 *As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

What do you have that you can use for God's service? What time, energy, talents, gifts, and resources are at your disposal? Because the truth of Scripture is that these do not belong to us, but we are stewards to use of these for the strengthening of other believers and the building of the church. And you can get creative about what you can do. Once you discover your gifts you must be equipped to serve...

- *by being equipped to serve*

Ephesians 4 says the pastors are given to equip you, the church, to do the work of ministry.

Ephesians 4:11-12 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ*

In Hebrews 5, the author rebukes the readers because by this time they should have been competent enough to teach and lead, but because they didn't take their responsibility seriously, he had to go back and teach them the basics of the faith again. Because they only wanted to be served.

- *by developing a servant's heart*

The equipping to serve can only come from a desire to serve. A desire to reciprocate the love which you have received from God. This heart attitude is marked by a desire to serve rather than be served. A love for God and His people that you don't need to have your opinions or preferences met, but you are more concerned about meeting the needs and concerns of others.

Philippians 2:3-4 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

4. I will support the testimony of my church

- *by attending faithfully*

Hebrews 10:25 *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

When you are not at the church, you cannot stir up others to love and good works. If you are not with the church, how can you use your spiritual gifts? This doesn't mean you can't miss a Sunday. The exhortation here is to not forsake the assembly. Don't neglect it. Don't abandon the family.

- *by living a godly life*

Philippians 1:27 *Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*

Your conduct reflects your beliefs. If you profess to be a Christian, yet live like the world, your conduct is speaker louder than your profession. Philippians 2 speaks of your life and your conduct as being a powerful witness to the Gospel. It can either bring people towards Christ or turn them away from Christ. The way you live your life matters as it is a reflection on God and His church.

- *by giving regularly*

Paul gives specific instructions for the church at Corinth in both of his letters.

1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*

This is where we see the principle of giving through the weekly offering in the New Testament. While that provides the method, 2 Corinthians 9:7 provides the mindset behind it.

2 Corinthians 9:7 *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

There is much manipulation given in churches today about testing God with how much you give so you can receive more back. The Bible promises blessings for those who give, but it never promises those blessings to be monetary in nature. And these blessings are not promised to be in this life. They can be, but not always. Everything we have belongs not to us, but to God, and we are simply managers of that, including our finances.

5. I will submit myself to the accountability of my church

Having accountability is like having guardrails in your life which prevent you from going off the path and wrecking your faith. One side of the guardrail is the church members, mutually looking out for one another in compassionate care. On the other side of the guardrail are the church leaders, looking out for your souls as we will give an account for them. So, what does submitting to the accountability of the church look like?

- *by allowing others to examine my life for unrepentant sin*

James 5:19-20 *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

There are times in your life where you don't know that you are in sin. You are blind to it because of your own pride and deception. But it is clear to others around you. What is most loving is when a brother or sister in Christ comes to you and lets you know about that.

- *by letting others correct me when necessary for the purpose of restoration*

Those who care most about godliness receive the correction because they know it points them towards greater holiness and obedience to God.

Galatians 6:1 *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

- *by submitting to the biblical process of church discipline when necessary*

The accountability that is humbly received ultimately results in submitting to church discipline if necessary.

Matthew 18:15-17 *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.*

The goal of church discipline is not punishment, but restoration. The goal of church discipline is to restore the believer both to God and to the church through the loving pursuit of its members. And when the sinning brother or sister repents, the church forgives.

Luke 17:3 *Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*

We can easily forgive others as we have been forgiven much by God. We have no reason to withhold forgiveness from someone when God has not withheld forgiveness from us. No one will ever sin against us more than we have sinned against God. And as you think on how much you have been forgiven, you will quickly move to forgive others as you have been forgiven.

As we have gone through this list of covenant commitments, you may have realized these are not just for church members, but for all Christians. Church members are simply those who want to

be held accountable to these biblical principles and practices. Believers should be eager to commit to one another in the church.

What are the requirements for church membership at FBC Weston?

1. The candidate must be a believer in the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a credible testimony.
2. The candidate must have a Biblical baptism as stated above.
3. The candidate must be in agreement with FBC Weston's doctrinal statement (Baptist Faith & Message 2000 found in APPENDIX A) and structure.
4. The candidate must attend both consecutive Discovery Classes and complete all necessary documents presented at the class, meet with a pastor for an elder interview, and upon follow up from their previous church in a "transfer of letter" (if applicable), the candidate will be given the covenant agreement to sign.

APPENDIX A

Membership to FBC at Weston must be in adherence to the chosen Statement of Faith as stated below. As a Southern Baptist Church, we adhere to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. This is a summary of what we believe the Bible teaches as a church and leadership will keep all members accountable to this statement. While there is freedom to believe further in areas where there is doctrinal vagueness in the statement (ie. the continuation of the miraculous gifts or last things), there is no freedom to believe doctrine that is in contradiction to this statement (ie. Justification by faith and works, Paedo-baptism, or Transubstantiation).

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13;

Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

Note: This article was amended June 14, 2023, by action of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom.

Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

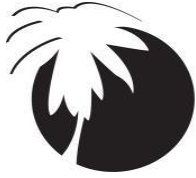
God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; Psalms 127; Psalms 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AT

Weston

First Baptist Church at Weston Covenant

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior, having been baptized and being in agreement with First Baptist Church at Weston's statements and structure, I do now feel confident that it's the Lord's will for me to unite with the First Baptist Church at Weston family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

1. I will protect the unity of my church

- by acting in love toward other members
- by refusing to gossip
- by following the pastors and leaders

1 Peter 1:22 - Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,
Romans 14:19 - Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.
Ephesians 4:29 - Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.
Hebrews 13:17 - Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

2. I will share the responsibility of my church

- by praying for its growth
- by caring for others in the church
- by warmly welcoming those who visit

Philippians 1:9-11 - And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
John 13:34-35 - A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
Galatians 6:10 - Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.
Luke 14:23 - Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'

3. I will serve the ministry of my church

- by discovering my gifts and talents
- by being equipped to serve
- by developing a servant's heart

1 Peter 4:10 - As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
Ephesians 4:11-12 - And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ
Philippians 2:3-4 - Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

4. I will support the testimony of my church

- by attending faithfully
- by living a godly life
- by giving regularly

Hebrews 10:25 - not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
Philippians 1:27 - Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel
1 Corinthians 16:2 - On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.
2 Corinthians 9:7 - So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

5. I will submit to the accountability of my church

- by allowing others to examine my life for unrepentant sin
- by letting others correct me when necessary for the purpose of restoration
- by submitting to the biblical process of church discipline when necessary

James 5:19-20 - Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.
Galatians 6:1 - Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
Matthew 18:15-17 - 'Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.
Luke 17:3 - Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

