



MEMBERSHIP CLASS



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FROM THE PASTORS & ELDERS
OF FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH
WELCOME!

The greatest reflection of Jesus to the world is meant to be the church! In God's great design, He created a need for community and family within each of us that has Christ at the center and is ultimately for our good and His glory. God has called this church family at Fellowship to be a people who are making disciples who live by God's grace and for His glory at home and across the world. And He has called us to do it together. To be on mission with one another, loving one another, living out the gospel and proclaiming that same gospel to the world around us. It is an inspiring journey and one that we sincerely desire you will take with us.

In Acts 2, the Scriptures speak of the importance of belonging to a local body of believers and the biblical responsibility each believer has to commit themselves to the mission of the church. There was a devotion and commitment to Christ and to one another that was both encouraging and compelling, inviting and influential, life-giving and life-changing. It is that same dynamic of belonging and mission that we long for everyone at Fellowship to experience. We are excited you have chosen to take a closer look at what it means to be a member at Fellowship Bible Church. We want everyone to know what it means to be devoted and committed to this local church family, and to provide a clear opportunity for everyone (whether you have been attending Fellowship for years, months or even weeks) to say, "I want you to consider me someone who is a part of this family, helping pursue the mission God has called us to together."

So as you journey through this material, know that it is more than just information. It is about an authentic commitment to Christ and to this local church family that will have lasting impact both now and for eternity. Let's move forward in carrying out God's mission for Fellowship to Central Arkansas and beyond.

Ben, Brandon, Justin, and Mark

GOALS FOR THIS STUDY

After completing Fellowship's membership study, it is our prayer that you will have:

- Deepened your personal affections for Jesus by becoming more grounded in the gospel
- Increased your understanding of Fellowship's mission and values
- Identified specific ways you can be a part of the mission of Fellowship through serving inside and outside our church walls, by being a part of biblical community, and by being faithful with your time, talents and treasure to the needs of our church
- Gained an understanding of your responsibilities as a member of a local body of believers

WHAT TO EXPECT

Each of the four weeks of this membership study focuses on a different aspect of Fellowship's values: Connection, Transformation and Multiplication. The first two sessions focus on how the gospel connects us to God and through that connection how we are then transformed. Session three speaks to the many ways we can multiply our faith at home and across the world. Session four is focused on understanding the commitments we make to one another as members of the local body of Christ known as Fellowship Bible Church.

Each week of the class has three different components:

- 1 Pre-class reading
- 2 Small group discussion concerning the material
- 3 Post-class homework where you seek to make the content your own

READ FOR OUR FIRST SESSION

- Fellowship's mission statement and values (pp. 20-21)
- "What is the Christian Gospel" by John Piper (p. 22)
- The following sections in Fellowship's Confession of Faith (p. 29): Triune God, Creation, Fall, Gospel, Redemption, Justification
- Session 1: The Gospel is of First Importance (p. 3); also read through the discussion questions at the end of the lesson and be prepared to share your thoughts on them during your small group

S E S S I O N O N E

THE GOSPEL IS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared also to me.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8

“Disconnected. This is how we start life, dead in our sins, and until we respond in faith to the grace of God in Jesus Christ this is how we will live. Our first and greatest priority in life is to be connected to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. All of life flows from this continuous, abiding relationship with Jesus and is initiated by His love and sustained by His grace.”

EXCERPT FROM FELLOWSHIP'S CONNECTION VALUE

WHY DO WE NEED GOOD NEWS?

The gospel can only become good news for us if we first see how bad the bad news really is for us. Because of the fall of mankind, we are all born into this world in sin. There is no part of us that is not corrupted by that sin. God, who is sovereign and holy, is justly offended by our sin so that until our sin is dealt with completely, we are alienated from Him and stand as His enemies. But here is our problem: we are completely unable on our own to overcome our sin so that we can become acceptable to God.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...” Romans 5:12

The good news is that He has taken the initiative to deal with our sin through His Son, Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

In order to answer this question let's start with a definition of the gospel and then briefly explain each phrase. The essence of the gospel is God's loving, gracious, saving work, planned since before the foundation of the world, through the sinless life, atoning death, victorious resurrection, and ongoing reign of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten and incarnate Son.

This sentence captures some key gospel truths.

- The gospel is God's plan since eternity past. It is not Plan B. It is the only plan God has ever had.
- The gospel is born out of love and given to us as an act of grace (nothing in us merits it).
- Jesus Christ is God and therefore He is the focal point of the gospel (and really all of Scripture).
- Jesus Christ is also man, a second, better Adam, but one without sin.
- Because Jesus was without sin, He is our perfect substitute and worthy redeemer so that His death completely atones for our sin and satisfies God's wrath.
- Jesus' resurrection vindicates Him to all of history, showing that He is indeed a worthy Savior.
- Today He reigns at the right hand of the Father, with everything under His power, rule, authority and dominion.

The gospel ultimately serves to exalt the name of Jesus, to the glory of God the Father.

“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:18-19

“Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

The gospel, then, can be summarized as the good news about Jesus.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL?

While gospel summaries like the above are definitely true, simply saying it or agreeing with it will not make it personal, good news for you. In order for the gospel to become good news for you, you must believe it in a personal, trusting way. Another word for that belief is faith. It is more than agreeing with a series of informational statements or even approving of those statements. To have faith in the gospel is to rely on it and to orient your life around following Jesus (imperfectly, because we still sin), rather than the values of the world. We call turning away from the world and toward Christ, “repentance.” It is this repentance that leads to joy in Christ. Ultimately, the gospel leads us to a deepening joy and satisfaction in Jesus.

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Mark 1:15

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:5-8

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10

YOU HAVE BEEN RECONCILED TO GOD AND ARE NOW AT PEACE WITH HIM

BLESSINGS OF GOSPEL BELIEF

Many times we have a very narrow understanding of what it means to be saved. Often we limit it to going to heaven, rather than hell, after we die. While eternity with God in heaven is certainly a key benefit of salvation, there is so much more. Although a complete list of the benefits of the gospel is impossible, here are a few:

- Your sins have been given to Christ, and His righteousness has been given to you in return (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- All of your past, present and future sins are forgiven by God (Colossians 2:13).
- You have been reconciled to God and are now at peace with Him (Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:18).
- You have been made new and have a new identity as an adopted child of God, an heir with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:29; Ephesians 1:11).
- Jesus Christ now prays and advocates for you to the Father (1 John 2:1).
- God Himself, through His Holy Spirit, now lives in you (Romans 8:11).
- The Spirit's presence in you is a guarantee that you will be kept in the faith and that all of the promises of God will come true for you (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:14).
- The Spirit is always praying for us, even when we do not know what to pray for (Romans 8:26).
- We have an all-sufficient supply of grace to enable us to live the Christian life and to bear the suffering that we face living in a fallen world (Romans 5:2; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10).
- We have works that God has purposed us to do (Ephesians 2:10).
- Death will have no hold over us...we will rise again (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).
- And most importantly, we will spend eternity with God in a new heaven and new earth that will be perfect...no pain, sin or sorrow (Revelation 21:3-4).

BAPTISM

Being baptized is an act of solidarity with Jesus. When we are baptized we declare to a watching world that we see His death as our death and His resurrection is our resurrection. We declare that we have died to our old lives oriented toward sin and that we embrace a new life oriented around following Jesus. While baptism does not save us, it is an outward sign that our salvation has occurred. Simply put, baptism is not optional for the Christian. It is the desire to be baptized that gives testimony to our desire for Christ. Baptism also serves as a means of grace that encourages us in our growth as a Christian. By remembering our baptism we are reminded of God's promise to finish the good work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 In your own words, share why the gospel is good news.
- 2 Why does God love you? How does your awareness of God's grace and mercy affect your worship of Him?
- 3 In what ways has your understanding of the gospel been more about head knowledge (agreeing with information about Jesus) rather than about a daily relationship with Jesus?
- 4 Knowing that the ultimate purpose of the gospel is to exalt Christ and glorify God, what parts of the gospel described above lead you to personal worship?

PUT IT INTO YOUR OWN WORDS

Take time to write in your own words why you need good news and why Jesus' life, death and resurrection is that good news you need.

READ FOR OUR NEXT SESSION

- The article "How To Be Filled with the Spirit" by John Piper (p. 25).
- The article "Four Root Idols" by Eric Geiger (p. 26).
- These sections in Fellowship's Confession of Faith: Gospel, Justification, Holy Spirit (pp. 30-31).
- Session 2: Transformed by the Gospel (p. 6); also read through the discussion questions at the end of the lesson and be prepared to share your thoughts on them during your small group.

S E S S I O N T W O

TRANSFORMED BY THE GOSPEL

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification..."

1 THESSALONIANS 4:3

"Our struggle in living the Christian life is
not doing, it is believing."

JOHN OWEN

"Grace is opposed to earning, not effort."

DALLAS WILLARD

"A disciple of Jesus is not someone who just knows a lot about Jesus or someone who just attends church. Instead, a disciple is someone who follows Jesus in every part of his or her life, seeking to become more and more like Jesus in attitude and action..."

FELLOWSHIP'S TRANSFORMATION VALUE

REMEMBER THE GOSPEL!

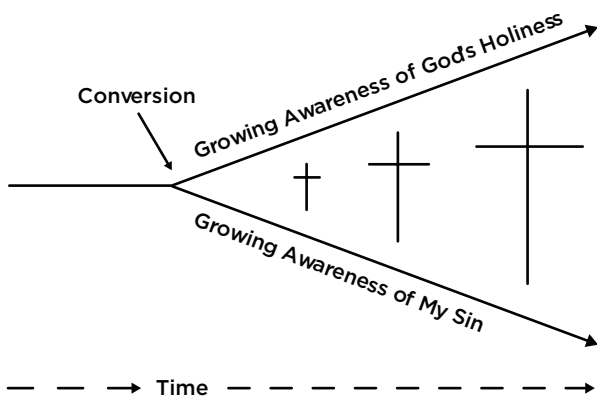
“May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.” 2 Peter 1:2-4

As the passage from 2 Peter states, through our faith in the gospel, Jesus gives us everything we need for life and godliness. Read that passage again...through the grace of Jesus He gives us everything we need! The gospel is good news not only for the next life, but also for this life. Yet, our tendency is to just see the gospel as something that benefits us in eternity (which we often limit to just keeping us out of hell) rather than as good news that fuels our walk in the Christian life. But the faith that leads to God’s justifying grace will also lead to His sanctifying grace.

GROWING IN GRACE VS. SHRINKING THE CROSS

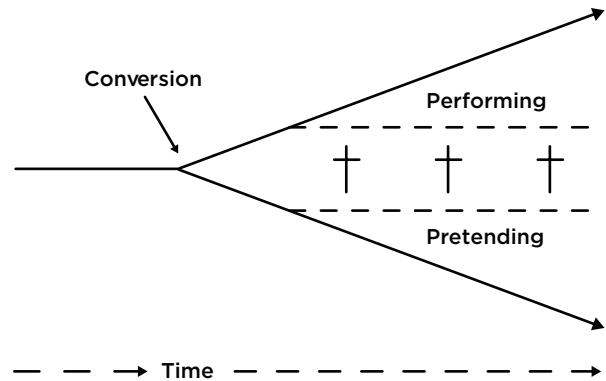
Christian growth occurs when we deepen our dependence on God’s grace. This is counter to how we think about development and education in human terms (which celebrates independence, not dependence).

Growing as a Christian means that over time we become more aware of God’s holiness and our sinfulness so that we appreciate and depend more and more on the work of Jesus on the cross.



Source: Gospel-Centered Life

Unfortunately, we often tend to minimize God’s holiness and/or our sinfulness, which denies our ongoing need for the gospel and “shrinks” the cross. Ways we shrink the cross include pretending (denying or minimizing our sin) and performing (trying to gain God’s acceptance through our religious activities).



Source: Gospel-Centered Life

IDENTIFYING & REPENTING OF YOUR HEART IDOLS

John Calvin said that our hearts are “idol-making factories.” What that means is we have a sinful tendency to make created things (ourselves, other people, material possessions, etc.) what we value the most (as opposed to the creator Himself). Idolatry is at the root of all our sin struggles. To grow in grace means that we must face and crush our deep heart idols of power, control, comfort, and approval.

“FOR MY PEOPLE HAVE COMMITTED TWO EVILS: THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS, & HEWED OUT CISTERNS FOR THEMSELVES, BROKEN CISTERNS THAT CAN HOLD NO WATER.”
JEREMIAH 2:13

WALKING BY THE SPIRIT (NOT IN THE FLESH!)

Ultimately we fight against our sin through our belief, not through direct human effort or by simply “trying harder.” We sin not because we do not know what is righteous behavior, but because in our flesh we lack the power to do the right thing (obey God) for the right reason (to love and glorify God). If we try to fight against sin with human effort, which is all morality is, then we will not bear spiritual fruit, but will instead have lives that demonstrate the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21).

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Romans 8:5-11

GOD’S MEANS OF GRACE

So, if it is the role of the Holy Spirit to grow us into the likeness of Jesus and overcome sin, we have no role to play in it, right? Wrong! We engage in effort, but what kind? Grace-driven effort is what kind.

“APART FROM
GRACE-DRIVEN EFFORT,
PEOPLE DO NOT GRAVITATE
TOWARD GODLINESS,
PRAYER, OBEDIENCE
TO SCRIPTURE, FAITH, &
DELIGHT IN THE LORD.”
D.A. CARSON

We engage in effort by immersing ourselves in God’s chosen means of grace that remind us of the gospel, fill us with His Spirit, and redirect our thoughts from a fallen world to the heavenly places (Colossians 3:2). Grace-driven effort includes reading and meditating on Scripture, prayer, worship, and hearing the teaching of God’s word. It is God’s grace at work in us and around us that enables us to “put to death” our sinful desires (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5). We fight against sin with the weapons of grace that He has given us.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints...” Ephesians 6:10-18

REMEMBER YOUR JUSTIFICATION

At the moment of our salvation when our justification first occurred, we were sealed by the Holy Spirit who guarantees that all of the promises of God will come true for us (Ephesians 1:13-14). We cannot lose our salvation. Yet many people struggle with security in their salvation, believing that their very imperfect sanctification somehow affects their justification and causes God to once again be angry with them. But that is simply not true. God is pleased with you despite your sin because of your faith in His Son who was perfect for you. Once you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit at salvation, you are God’s forever!

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor

depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:37-39

TRANSFORMATION IS A TEAM SPORT

Sadly, many of us miss the opportunity to experience true transformation because we remain isolated from other Christians. But throughout Scripture we see that God uses community as His instrument of change.

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:13

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

“...CONFESS
YOUR SINS TO
ONE ANOTHER &
PRAY FOR ONE
ANOTHER...”
JAMES 5:16

"If you desire to experience a changed life, then get involved in spiritual community by joining a D-Group. D-Groups are small groups of people who meet regularly for the purpose of building relationships with each other, growing spiritually through Bible study and practicing our faith, and living on Christ's mission together by serving in our church, our community and with our global missions partners. If there is a specific sin struggle you keep wrestling with, we would love to come alongside you through pastoral counseling. You can contact care@fellowshipar.com to learn more about counseling on all our campuses."

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 2 Peter 1:3 says that Jesus has given you everything you need for life and godliness. What is a need you have right now for which you can trust Jesus will provide for you as a work of grace?
- 2 In what ways do you pretend (minimizing or denying your sin) and perform (act religiously) to earn God's acceptance?
- 3 Which of the heart idols (power, control, approval, comfort) do you lean toward?
- 4 Read Romans 14:23. How can this verse apply to the spiritual disciplines that are listed as part of our grace-driven effort (reading and meditating on Scripture, prayer, worship, and hearing the teaching of God's word)?
- 5 How do you think God sees you when you sin?

PUT IT INTO YOUR OWN WORDS

Take time this week and write out in your own words how walking by the power of the Holy Spirit will lead you to grow as a Christian.

READ FOR OUR NEXT SESSION

- The article "From Strangers to Missionaries" by Tim Brister (p. 27)
- The following sections in Fellowship's Confession of Faith: Kingdom of God, The Church (p. 31)
- Session 3: Multiplying the Gospel at Home and Across the World (p. 10); read through the discussion questions at the end of the lesson and be prepared to share your thoughts on them during your small group

SESSION THREE

MULTIPLYING THE GOSPEL AT HOME & ACROSS THE WORLD

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:18-20

"The plan of Christ is not dependent on having the right programs or hiring the right professionals but on building and being the right people—a community of people—who realize that we are all enabled and equipped to carry out the purpose of God for our lives."

DAVID PLATT, *RADICAL: TAKING BACK
YOUR FAITH FROM THE AMERICAN DREAM*

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO THE GREAT COMMISSION

God's mission is to redeem a broken people living in a broken creation to the praise of His glorious grace. His chosen instrument to accomplish this is the church. So, in one way, the Great Commission is an organizational mission. It belongs to the church.

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Ephesians 3:8-10

But the church can only engage in the mission of God if its people are engaged in that mission. Pastors and elders are to be equippers of the saints so the saints in turn can engage in the work of ministry (i.e., making disciples).

"And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..." Ephesians 4:11-13

PASS ALONG WHAT'S BEEN GIVEN TO YOU

Many people respond with a sense of inadequacy when they think about becoming a disciple-maker. We often believe we are not smart enough or good enough to pour into others spiritually. What if someone asks a question we can't answer?

There are two responses to this fear of making disciples. First, Jesus knew exactly what He was doing when He entrusted His mission to fallen human beings. Would He really allow His mission to fail by allowing us to fail? Second, the average church member already knows much more about the faith than most non-believers. Jesus does not expect you to be a theologian. He expects you to be faithful and to bear fruit in keeping with that faith. So, be faithful by sharing with others what has already been shared with you. That is the essence of making disciples.

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 2:1-2

MOTIVATION & FUEL FOR MISSIONAL LIVING

What is the difference between an unbeliever who works hard to make the world a better place and the believer who desires the same thing? The difference is that the Holy Spirit lives in the believer so that whatever he or she does is motivated first by love of God and then by love of others. Ultimately, our good works serve as a billboard to a watching world that says "We love God and we love all people." All that gives glory back to God, which is our chief aim in missional living.

But remember, even good things done for a wrong reason can be sinful. We don't rely on our flesh, our own effort, to do good in this broken world. Instead, we focus on our faith and lean into God's grace to fuel our effort. God predestined our good works before we were even born and will provide the means to accomplish them, all to His glorious praises.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

"...GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE ALL GRACE ABOUND TO YOU, SO THAT HAVING ALL SUFFICIENCY IN ALL THINGS AT ALL TIMES, YOU MAY ABOUND IN EVERY GOOD WORK"
2 CORINTHIANS 9:8

THINKING LIKE A MISSIONARY

A missionary is not only someone who has decided to move to a foreign country to spread the gospel. (Although more global missionaries are certainly needed!) Being on mission with Fellowship means you are already a missionary. So the question to wrestle with is “Where is my mission field?”

Begin to think like the missionary you already are. Thinking like a missionary means being intentional about spreading the gospel in the contexts you already find yourself. Look for people in your neighborhood, kids’ schools, athletic

leagues, workplace, country club, pool, etc. who need the Good News. Develop relationships with them and begin to share the hope you have because of the gospel (1 Peter 3:15). The key is not to see people as projects, but to develop relationships with them and to see them as God sees them: people He loves and for whom He died.

MULTIPLYING THROUGH FELLOWSHIP’S LOCAL & GLOBAL MISSIONS

Through Fellowship’s missions department, we have numerous opportunities to multiply your faith at home and across the world. For more information about local and global opportunities, go to fellowshipar.com/missions.

Additionally, Fellowship plans serve days at different points during the year where we show up together at a place of need and saturate others with God’s love through tangible acts of service.

MULTIPLYING THROUGH MULTISITE CAMPUSES

With over 600,000 people in Central Arkansas who are not connected with a church, our elders and pastors continue to ask, “How can we make more disciples of Jesus? And as Little Rock and the communities around it grow, how does Fellowship continue to reach and impact our region with the gospel?”

Having multiple church campuses is one way that Fellowship is answering those questions. Fellowship currently has six campuses: Benton, Cabot, Español, Maumelle, Midtown, and West Little Rock. Each campus gets the shared benefits and resources of the whole church, while providing the congregations at each campus with opportunities for worship, community and service in their home communities. Each campus has its own pastoral staff, ministries and facilities to meet the unique needs of their communities. But Fellowship’s campuses are all united in vision, mission and ministry strategies. In addition, through the use of technology, all campuses experience the weekly biblical teaching by our team of pastors. Remember, as you consider membership at Fellowship, your church family includes brothers and sisters of Christ at our other campuses! Also, as you engage in our mission of making disciples and connect with someone who does not have a church home, do not hesitate to encourage that person to attend any of Fellowship’s campuses.

“WHEN HE SAW THE CROWDS, HE HAD COMPASSION FOR THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE HARASSED & HELPLESS, LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. THEN HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, ‘THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE LABORERS ARE FEW; THEREFORE PRAY EARNESTLY TO THE LORD OF THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT LABORERS INTO HIS HARVEST.’”
MATTHEW 9:36-38

MULTIPLYING THROUGH SERVING AT FELLOWSHIP

One of the easiest mission fields to access is located at Fellowship every Sunday. It's serving the 4,000+ adults and children who worship with us every week at all of our campuses. Serving on the Connection X-Team (short for experience team), you meet people new to Fellowship and encourage them in their next step of faith. Get involved in the café and use your gift of hospitality to brighten someone's Sunday experience. Become a volunteer in Fellowship Kids or Fellowship Students and you will have an opportunity to disciple the next generation. There are many opportunities to multiply your faith through serving at Fellowship. Go to fellowshipar.com/serve to see all of the areas where you can serve.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Share about a person who has poured into you. How did that person make a difference in your life?
- 2 Think about your weekly work/life rhythms and contexts. How would you describe the mission field in which God has placed you? Who is the "people group" to whom you are called to minister to? (Get specific.)
- 3 Focusing still on your "mission field," in what ways do you see the people in that mission field being harassed by difficulties in life? Is it poverty? Lack of education? Broken families? Materialism? Destructive lifestyles? How does the gospel speak to these struggles?
- 4 How would you rate your faithfulness in sharing what you already know about your faith with those who need hope? In what ways does fear keep you from being more faithful in sharing the Good News with others?
- 5 If you currently serve on Sunday morning, share what excites you about serving. If you do not currently serve, why not?

PUT IT INTO YOUR OWN WORDS

Take time this week to write out in your own words what it means to be faithful to pass on what has already been taught to you.

READ FOR OUR NEXT SESSION

- "What is a Local Church" by Jonathan Leeman (p. 23)
- The article on giving at Fellowship (p. 24)
- The following sections in Fellowship's Confession of Faith: Revelation, Kingdom of God, The Church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (pp. 29-32)
- Session 4: Connected to One Another through the Gospel (pp. 14-17); also read through the discussion questions at the end of the lesson and be prepared to share your thoughts during your small group

SESSION FOUR

CONNECTED TO ONE ANOTHER THROUGH **THE GOSPEL**

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body."

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

Because of our faith in the gospel, we are new creatures, with a new purpose and new relationships. We are now part of the household of God, which is the church universal and the local body of believers. Through our faith in the gospel, we each have more in common with other members of God's household (even those on the other side of the world) than we do with non-believers (even a relative or neighbor).

WHAT IS A LOCAL CHURCH?

"To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Ephesians 3:8-10

"The local church is the authority on earth that Jesus has instituted to officially affirm and give shape to my Christian life and yours." Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership*

The following should be present whenever the local church is present:

- Regular gathering
- Proclamation of the gospel/teaching of the word
- Ordinances (baptism, communion)
- A unified mission
- Community
- Governance

WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

"Church membership is a formal relationship between a church and a Christian characterized by the church's affirmation and oversight of a Christian's discipleship and the Christian's submission to living out His or her discipleship in the care of the church." Jonathan Leeman, *Church Membership*

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

- Affirmation of your faith.
- Encouragement in your faith (all of the "one-anothers" of scripture).
- Participation with others in the life of the faith
- Shepherding of your faith by the pastors and elders.

“NOW YOU ARE THE BODY
OF CHRIST & INDIVIDUALLY
MEMBERS OF IT”
1 CORINTHIANS 12:27

WHO CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF FELLOWSHIP?

A member is someone who:

- Professes faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ followed by baptism*.
- Affirms the belief and practice of Fellowship's Confession of Faith.
- Is willing to be in submission to the leadership of Fellowship's elders.

**If you have been baptized by another church following a profession of faith, we will recognize your baptism. However, if you have never been baptized or if you have concerns about the nature of your previous baptism, please discuss this with the elder or pastor who is hosting your small group. We regularly celebrate baptisms in our worship services. You can read through FAQ's about baptism on page 34.*

...LET US CONSIDER
HOW TO STIR UP ONE
ANOTHER TO LOVE &
GOOD WORKS, NOT
NEGLECTING TO MEET
TOGETHER, AS IS THE
HABIT OF SOME, BUT
ENCOURAGING ONE
ANOTHER, & ALL THE
MORE AS YOU SEE THE
DAY DRAWING NEAR.
HEBREWS 10:24-25

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP?

1 CONSISTENT ATTENDANCE AT PUBLIC WORSHIP SERVICES

We regularly gather on Sundays as an outpost of the gospel. We encourage one another in the gospel, that we might go out with the message of the gospel (Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 2:42-43). Our public gathering glorifies God on a weekly basis as a public display of His infinite worth. In the gathering we sing praises, hear the preaching of God's word, and participate in the sacred ordinances (baptism and communion) as a means for God's grace to fill us with His Spirit so that we may walk in newness of life.

2 PARTICIPATION IN BIBLICAL COMMUNITY SMALL GROUPS

At Fellowship we have small groups known as Discipleship Groups, or D-Groups. D-Groups focus on the equipping of the body so that its members may grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and see how that grace works out in our everyday lives (Acts 2:42-47). Through D-Groups our members experience their primary one another relationships, especially in terms of their discipleship and care in times of need.

3 SERVE OTHERS, BUT ESPECIALLY THOSE IN OUR CHURCH

We use our gifts to serve one another for the building up of the body and the expansion of the kingdom as a joyful expression of the grace within us (1 Corinthians 12:4-12; Acts 2; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:11-19). When we as Christ-followers serve the needs of others we are joining God in His mission to bring hope to the hopeless and to redeem a broken creation from the effects of the Fall.

Our members are expected to serve in the church (Galatians 6:10). If you are not serving, take time now to visit fellowshipar.com/serve.

4 ENGAGE IN OUR MISSION

Everyone is called to Fellowship's mission—making disciples who live by God's grace and for His glory at home and across the world (Matthew 28:19-20). For most, what that looks like is being faithful to pass to others what has already been shared with us (2 Timothy 2:2). We do that in many different contexts: in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, etc.

We are never on mission alone. All of us need a Paul to pour into us, a Timothy or two that we can pour into, and more than one Barnabas we experience life with and who encourage us in our own journeys.

5 STEWARD YOUR RESOURCES FOR GOD'S PURPOSES & GLORY

Members use their resources in a way that glorifies God—personal gifts, talents, time, energy, and finances. As it relates to finances, members are especially committed to giving regularly and sacrificially, with the heart of cheerful giver, to financially support the needs of the church (Acts 2:44-45; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, 9:9-14; Proverbs 3:9; 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

If you have not already done so, please read through the article "Giving" on page 24 to understand why we give our resources to support the work of ministry at Fellowship and specific ways you can give.

6 FOLLOW THE LEADERSHIP OF FELLOWSHIP'S ELDERS

Christ is the head of the church and elders serve under His authority. Elders exercise oversight of the local body through prayer, governance, teaching, and shepherding. Biblically qualified men (described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), are appointed to be elders by Fellowship's existing elders, subject to an opportunity by the body to affirm the elder candidate or to express concerns with a biblical qualification of the candidate.

7 SUBMIT TO DISCIPLINE & RESTORATION BY THE CHURCH WHEN ENSNARED IN SIN

Church discipline is a loving grace that is practiced when a member is ensnared in sin yet refuses to repent. It is a corrective discipline that is restorative, not judgmental. Its purpose is meant to restore those in sin back to the full life of the church. However, when someone persists in unrepentance, the elders, after prayer and discerning conversations, may remove someone from the life of the church and preclude their attendance at corporate worship (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5). You can learn more about member discipline and restoration at Fellowship on pages 35.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 In what ways would you agree (or disagree) with the statement “you have more in common with a believer who is a stranger than a non-believing neighbor or relative?”
- 2 Thinking about your life in the faith and previous churches you may have been a part of, how has being a member of a church (as opposed to an “attender”) made a difference in your growth as a Christian?
- 3 Review the list of benefits of church membership. Which benefit do you see as the greatest need in your life right now?
- 4 Fellowship is an elder-led church, which means that the elders give oversight to all aspects of the church’s direction, operations, and staff. This can be contrasted with other churches that use a congregational model of governance (where members vote on some matters) and an ecclesiastical hierarchy model (with bishops and other clergy making decisions). Have you ever been a part of an elder-led church? Do you have any questions or concerns with the structure of our leadership?
- 5 As stated above, membership includes responsibilities. In looking at the list of responsibilities, which seem the easiest to embrace? The most difficult?

PUT IT INTO YOUR OWN WORDS

Take some time this week and write in your own words why you believe church membership is important.

YOUR NEXT STEPS TOWARD MEMBERSHIP

Congratulations for completing Fellowship's membership study!

On behalf of the Elders of Fellowship, we appreciate your diligence in reading through all the material and participating in the small group each week. We know this was a big time commitment on your part and appreciate the priority you have given to this study.



SO WHAT'S NEXT?

We hope that after being part of this study you are more equipped (and excited!) to be a member of Fellowship.

Here are your next steps:

- Read through Fellowship's membership commitment on page 33.
- Meet for a follow up meeting with your pastor or elder to sign your Membership Covenant.
- As we learned in the study, to be a member of the church is to be a member of a spiritual family who has responsibilities to other members of the family. We are for one another and serve one another by being a member of a D-Group and by joining in one of the many ministry opportunities at Fellowship. If you are not already in a D-Group and serving our church family, you can still pursue membership at Fellowship, but we would ask that you begin to take steps to join a D-Group and to start serving. Simply stop by the Connection Center any Sunday morning, and our staff and volunteers will be happy to assist you in getting plugged in.

It is quite common for individuals to have questions about what it means to be a follower of Jesus or to have questions about Fellowship. If that is where you are, we want to help you answer those questions.

ADDITIONAL READING

FELLOWSHIP'S MISSION

MAKING DISCIPLES WHO LIVE BY GOD'S GRACE & FOR HIS GLORY AT HOME & ACROSS THE WORLD

Two of the most important words that Jesus ever spoke were: "Follow Me." A statement filled with clarity and mystery that invite a person to leave behind His personal agenda and become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Disciples who long to become like Jesus in both attitude and action. Jesus did not spend His time on the earth glorifying Himself by flaunting His perfection to the world. But He laid down His rights to give humanity the grace that we did not deserve to glorify His heavenly Father instead. And He did this while equipping and empowering 12 disciples to follow in His footsteps making disciples in Judea, Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth. This is our prayer. This is our desire. Fellowship's mission is directly linked to Jesus' Great Commission. We desire to be a people who are making disciples who live by God's grace and for His glory at home and across the world.

WHY & HOW WE MAKE DISCIPLES

One reason we make disciples is, of course, to be obedient to the commands of Jesus. But why do we want to obey? To glorify God. The reason we do anything as a disciple is to glorify God. Our desire to glorify God is how we respond when we truly see the majesty of God manifested in His righteous rule over everything and His incredible grace toward those who have faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

God not only provides our motives to make disciples (His glory), but He also gives us the means: grace. Grace is God's initiative to save us at great cost to Himself, specifically the death of His Son. The grace-dependent disciple understands the overwhelming cost of grace to God and the unmerited generosity He has shown man. Ultimately, it is God who makes and sustains the disciple.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Jesus' first disciples were apprentice-students (not classroom students) who learned and applied His teachings in their everyday lives as they literally followed Him throughout His public ministry. Within the context of the modern church, a disciple is someone who becomes an apprentice-student of Jesus by following Him through believing in the gospel and seeking to become like Him in all areas of the disciples life. All Christians should be disciples of Jesus.

Here at Fellowship, we define a disciple as a person who by God's grace:

- Connects with God and others
- Becomes transformed in attitude and action
- Multiplies disciples at home and across the world

FELLOWSHIP'S VALUES



Connection

Disconnected. This is how we start life, dead in our sins, and until we respond in faith to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, this is how we will live. Our first and greatest priority in life is to be connected to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. All of life flows from this continuous, abiding relationship with Jesus and is initiated by His love and sustained by His grace. We must first BE with Jesus before we ever DO for Jesus. Through this connection we also see that we were created for connection with others. God did not design us to do life on our own. He made us to know and be known. We believe this happens best in the context of spiritual community, which we call D Groups, where we can engage in the one another commands of Scripture and grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus Christ.



Transformation

A disciple of Jesus is not someone who just knows a lot about Jesus or someone who just attends church. Instead, a disciple is someone who follows Jesus in every part of his or her life, seeking to become more and more like Jesus in attitude and action. And since transformation is about our similarity to Christ, then discipleship must be something more than religious activities like attending Sunday worship or being a part of a Bible study (which are good things to do). True transformation occurs as a gift of God's grace and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our role is to be continually aware of our ongoing need for transformation and faith that God will finish the work He has begun in us.



Multiplication

Multiplication is what results when people live connected to Christ, connected to each other and are being transformed into His likeness by grace. God's desire is to advance the gospel and the chief way He does so is through multiplication. God has been intentional in directing our lives so we should live with intentionality in looking for opportunities to enter into His work of multiplication, making disciples. While there are a lot of places to make disciples, the two primary places are at home and across the world. By home, we mean the place where each of us live and do life with others. Within our home is a sphere of key relationships—a spouse, children, friends, co-workers—and it's in the context of these significant relationships where perhaps we have the greatest opportunity to multiply disciples who follow Jesus. But, the ministry of multiplication doesn't stop in the home—it carries around the world. God has a heart for people of all nations and desires to see His gospel advance across the world through His people being disciples, who make disciples with intentionality all across the world for the glory and fame of God.

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL?

BY JOHN PIPER

The gospel is not just a sequence of steps (say, the “Four Laws” of Campus Crusade or the “Six Biblical Truths” of Quest for Joy). Those are essential. But what makes the gospel “good news” is that it connects a person with the “unsearchable riches of Christ.”

There is nothing in itself that makes “forgiveness of sins” good news. Whether being forgiven is good news depends on what it leads to. You could walk out of a courtroom innocent of a crime and get killed on the street. Forgiveness may or may not lead to joy. Even escaping hell is not in itself the good news we long for—not if we find heaven to be massively boring.

Nor is justification in itself good news. Where does it lead? That is the question. Whether justification will be good news, depends on the award we receive because of our imputed righteousness. What do we receive because we are counted righteous in Christ? The answer is fellowship with Jesus.

Forgiveness of sins and justification are good news because they remove obstacles to the only lasting, all-satisfying source of joy: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not merely the means of our rescue from damnation; He is the goal of our salvation. If He is not satisfying to be with, there is no salvation. He is not merely the rope that pulls us from the threatening waves; He is the solid beach under our feet, and the air in our lungs, and the beat of our heart, and the warm sun on our skin, and the song in our ears, and the arms of our beloved.

This is why the New Testament often defines the gospel as, simply, Christ. The gospel is the “gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 2:12, 9:13, 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; etc.). Or, more specifically, the gospel is “the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). And even more wonderfully, perhaps, Paul says that the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).

Therefore to believe the gospel is not only to accept the awesome truths that 1) God is holy, 2) we are hopeless sinners, 3) Christ died and rose again for sinners, and 4) this great salvation is enjoyed by faith in Christ—but believing the gospel is also to treasure Jesus Christ as your unsearchable riches. What makes the gospel Gospel is that it brings a person into the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of Jesus Christ.

The words Jesus will speak when we come to heaven are: “Enter into the joy of your Master” (Matthew 25:21). The prayer He prayed for us ended on this note: “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory” (John 17:24). The glory He wants us to see is the “unsearchable riches of Christ.” It is “the immeasurable riches of [God’s] grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

The superlatives “unsearchable” and “immeasurable” mean that there will be no end to our discovery and enjoyment. There will be no boredom. Every day will bring forth new and stunning things about Christ which will cause yesterday’s wonder to be seen in new light, so that not only will there be new sights of glory everyday, but the accumulated glory will become more glorious with every new revelation.

The gospel is the good news that the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of the never-boring, ever-satisfying Christ is ours freely and eternally by faith in the sin-forgiving death and hope-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ.

May God give you “strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:18-19).

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WHAT IS A LOCAL CHURCH?

BY JONATHAN LEEMAN

A local church is a group of Christians that regularly gather in Christ's name to officially affirm and oversee one another's membership in Jesus Christ and His kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances.

That's a bit clunky, I know, but notice the five parts of this definition:

- a group of Christians;
- a regular gathering;
- a congregation-wide exercise of affirmation and oversight;
- the purpose of officially representing Christ and His rule on earth—they gather in His name;
- the use of preaching and ordinances for these purposes.

Just as a pastor's pronouncement transforms a man and a woman into a married couple, so the latter four bullet points transform an ordinary group of Christians spending time together at the park—presto!—into a local church.

The gathering is important for a number of reasons. One is that it's where we Christians "go public" to declare our highest allegiance. It's the outpost or embassy, giving a public face to our future nation. And it's where we bow before our king, only we call it worship. The Pharaohs of the world may oppose us, but God draws His people

out of the nations to worship Him. He will form His mighty congregation.

The gathering is also where our King enacts His rule through preaching, the ordinances, and discipline. The gospel sermon explains the "law" of our nation. It declares the name of our King and explains the sacrifice He made to become our king. It teaches us of His ways and confronts us in our disobedience. And it assures us of His imminent return.

Through baptism and the Lord's Supper, the church waves the flag and dons the army uniform of our nation. It makes us visible. To be baptized is to identify ourselves with the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as to identify our union with Christ's death and resurrection (Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3-5). To receive the Lord's Supper is to proclaim His death and our membership in His body (1 Corinthians 11:26-29; cf. Matthew 26:26-29). God wants His people to be known and marked off. He wants a line between the church and the world.

What is the local church? It's the institution which Jesus created and authorized to pronounce the gospel of the kingdom, to affirm gospel professors, to oversee their discipleship, and to expose impostors. All this means, we don't "join" churches like we join clubs. We submit to them.

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GIVING

Scripture has much to say on the issues of work, money, possessions, and how we are to use our wealth. God's word tells us that true contentment in life is not found in wealth or possessions, but in Him and in loving and serving others.

Several key biblical principles on giving include:

- It should be voluntary and from the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- It should be regular and proportional to our income (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- It should be a first priority (Proverbs 3:9).
- We should start NOW, regardless of our circumstances (2 Corinthians 8:1-3).
- Remember, God promises a return now and in eternity (Luke 6:38).
- My giving demonstrates my belief in Jesus and is an act of worship (Acts 20:35).

Some perspectives on how much we should give:

- Our giving decisions can serve as a helpful diagnostic tool on our priorities—"Where your treasure is there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).
- The Old Testament reflects multiple examples of giving a tithe (10%).
- Every giving example in the New Testament reflects giving more than a tithe. God has been generous to us and loves for us to be generous.

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" Malachi 3:10.

We encourage our members to accept the challenge of this verse. Would you consider tithing out of your income for three months and see how God would use your giving to draw you closer to Him? There is no better time than now to start.

God has chosen to provide for the work of His church by working in the hearts of His people prompting them to give. Every gift is important. We are very thankful for your support of all the ministries and outreach activities at Fellowship.

HOW CAN I GIVE AT FELLOWSHIP?

We want to make it as easy as possible for you to give in the way that is most appropriate for your situation. We offer a number of giving options:

- Give Online—Online giving is fast, easy and secure. Online giving allows for a specific dollar amount of your choosing to be automatically deducted from a bank or credit card account.
- Give on Sunday—Place cash or checks payable to Fellowship Bible Church in the offering plate during a Sunday services.
- Give by Mail—You can mail your contribution for any campus to the church office at our West Little Rock campus. (Do not send cash by mail.)

If giving online or by mail, designate which campus your offering is for.

If you need help to develop your own personal giving plan or would like to learn how you can give non-cash gifts to support Fellowship, please feel free to contact our Finance Team at finance@fellowshipar.com or at 224-7171.

If you need help to develop your own personal giving plan or would like to learn how you can give non-cash gifts to support Fellowship, please feel free to contact our Finance Team at 224-7171.

HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

BY JOHN PIPER

I promised on Sunday that I would write this STAR article on how to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, “Do not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.” I argued Sunday morning that verses 19-21 describe the effects of being filled with the Spirit. The effect in verse 19 is very musical. Clearly joy in Christ is the mark of being filled with the Spirit. But not only joy. Also gratitude in verse 20—perpetual gratitude, gratitude for everything. (Which obviously eliminates grumbling and pouting and self-pity and bitterness and scowling and murmuring and depression and worry and discouragement and gloominess and pessimism!) But not only musical joy and universal gratitude, but also loving submission to each other’s needs (v. 21). Joy, gratitude and humble love—these are the marks of being filled with the Spirit. To this should also be added boldness in witness from Acts (see Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 13:9). No one can fail to be bold and eager in witness when the Spirit is producing in Him overflowing joy, perpetual gratitude and humble love. O how we need to be filled with the Spirit! Let’s seek it! Pursue it!

How? Start with the closest parallel: “Don’t be drunk with wine, be filled with the Spirit!” How do you get drunk with wine? You drink it. Lots of it. The wine of Paul’s day was so weak you would have to drink for hours to get drunk. So how then shall we get drunk (filled) with the Spirit? Drink it! Lots of it. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “We were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Jesus said, “If anyone thirst let Him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of His heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Spirit.” (John 7:37f).

How can you drink the Spirit? Paul said, “Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5). We drink the Spirit by setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. What does “setting the mind on” mean? Colossians 3:1, 2 says, “Seek the things that are above...set your minds on things that are

above.” “Setting the mind on” means seeking, directing your attention toward, being very concerned about (Philippians 3:19), being devoted to and taken up with. So drinking the Spirit means seeking the things of the Spirit, directing your attention to the things of the Spirit, being devoted to the things of the Spirit.

What are the “things of the Spirit?” When Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “The natural man does not welcome the things of the Spirit,” He was referring to His own Spirit-inspired teachings (2:13) about the thoughts and ways and plans of God (2:8-10). Therefore, “The things of the Spirit” are the teachings of the apostles about God. Jesus also said, “The words that I have spoken to you are Spirit and life” (John 6:63). Therefore, the teachings of Jesus are also the “things of the Spirit.”

So drinking the Spirit means setting our minds on the things of the Spirit. And setting our minds on the things of the Spirit means directing our eager attention to the teachings of the apostles about God and to the words of Jesus. If we do this long enough we will get drunk with the Spirit. In fact we will get addicted to the Spirit. Instead of chemical dependency we will develop a wonderful Spirit-dependency.

One more tip: the Holy Spirit is not like wine because He is a person and is free to come and go where He wills (John 3:8). Therefore Luke 11:13 must be added. Jesus said to His disciples, “If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” If we want to be filled with the Spirit we must pray for it. And that is just what Paul does for the Ephesians in chapter 3, verse 19. He asks His Father in heaven (v. 14) that the believers “might be filled with all the fullness of God.” Drink and pray. Drink and pray. Drink and pray.

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FOUR ROOT IDOLS

BY ERIC GEIGER

Last week I was honored to spend a day with the team at Austin Stone Church. I preached there two years ago for their summer preaching series, but this time I was blessed to speak to the staff and then teach a systematic theology session at Austin Stone Institute. Each week 300 plus men and women gather to study together. It is pretty incredible. After the general session, men and women break into different groups for men and women's development. During the session with the men, I was asked to teach on the "four root idols" that often drive our sinful behavior. Austin Stone, and other churches, utilizes the framework as a tool to help men and women repent more specifically of our heart's motivations.

Martin Luther believed that every violation of the Ten Commandments was first a violation of the first commandment, putting another god besides Him in my life. If I give false testimony, it is because I have set something else in my heart above God that is worth lying for. If I steal, it is because I have first set up something else in my life that is cherished above Him. Or stated succinctly, "Under every behavioral sin is the sin of idolatry."

Christian leaders Tim Keller, David Powlison and Dick Keyes have written much more extensively on the idols beneath the surface, but here is a snapshot of four root idols that drive our behavior:

- Power: a longing for influence or recognition
- Control: a longing to have everything go according to my plan
- Comfort: a longing for pleasure
- Approval: a longing to be accepted or desired

Someone may long for a promotion and the accompanying salary. There is nothing wrong with either; the intensity of the desire is what makes it sinful. Or as Calvin stated, "The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much."

The person's root idol could be different from someone else longing for the same promotion. A person with a power idol wants the bigger salary, not because of the money, but because of the status the money can offer. A person with control as an idol wants the bigger salary to save more money to eliminate uncertainty and gain more assurance for the future. A person with the comfort idol wants the new "whatever," and the person with approval idol wants to use the new "whatever" to win friends.

So how do I repent of the idol beneath the surface? How do we keep ourselves from idols, as the apostle John instructed (I John 5:21)? Thomas Chalmers said, "The best way to overcome the world is not with morality or self-discipline. Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing something more attractive than the world: Christ."

I repent of my idolatry not by looking myself in the mirror and telling myself I can displace it in my energy, might, or goodness. I repent of my lesser gods by remembering the Great God who is above all gods. We can repent of our longing for:

- 1 Power by submitting to His greater power within me (Ephesians 5:18).
- 2 Control by surrendering to His ultimate control (Ecclesiastes 3:12-14).
- 3 Comfort by remembering He is the greater comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).
- 4 Approval by rejoicing in His gracious approval (Galatians 3:13; Numbers 6:24-26).

His power is greater. His control is perfect. His comfort is satisfying. And His approval is eternal. There is no god like our God.

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FROM STRANGERS TO MISSIONARIES: *A STRATEGY FOR MISSION*

BY TIM BRISTER

Over the past month, many people have heard about my “Jericho Road Moment.” That story is part of a bigger story this year where I’m praying and pursuing God’s kingdom work in my neighborhood and city with renewed initiative and intentionality. Over the past couple months, I’ve been working to gain greater clarity on how to make that happen.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into the world and make disciples. I believe, first and foremost, Jesus is speaking of cross-cultural engagement of unreached people groups. The thrust has an expansive, horizontal dimension no doubt. But, I also believe that the making of disciples has a depth dimension as well. Even in “reached” areas of our cities, there are many unreached and unengaged people. Let’s be honest: What percentage of our city is unengaged with the gospel? What percentage of people have any proximity to the kingdom of Christ?

A HELPFUL DIAGNOSTIC TO CONSIDER

In my city, we have 165,000 people. The best research I could find is that less than 10,000 belong to any church. That means 155,000+ people need the gospel of Jesus Christ. We dwell in the same city, but for all intents and purposes, they are strangers to me and every other Christian and church. When we are not on mission, the way a church “grows” is by shuffling some of the 10,000 when things don’t work out (transfer growth). It may give the appearance that we are reaching our city with the gospel when in reality we are simply receiving Christians who are either new to the area, or done with their previous church. We are skimming the surface with no missional depth to genuinely engage the city, evangelize the lost, and establish new disciples in the faith.

Here’s a helpful diagnostic to consider. How many non-Christians do you know on a first-name basis?

How many of them would consider you a friend? What percentage of your relationship investments is with those who do not know Jesus Christ? How accessible are you to those in your world who do not know God? If the members of our church cannot, off the top of their heads, list 3-5 unbelievers they know, then we have missional atrophy. If the overwhelming percentage of relationship investments of church members are with other Christians, then it has become ingrown. If there are not pathways for pursuing those far from God in our lives, then we have put the Great Commission on the shelf to collect dust.

THE BIG PICTURE

What I’ve done to help me make sense is to answer the questions: What will it take for me to go deep into the unengaged sections of my city to make disciples of Jesus? How can I measure missional advance and impact? To help answer those questions, I have developed this city and neighborhood strategy:

- Strangers need to become Neighbors through missional intentionality.
- Neighbors need to become Acquaintances through incarnational integrity.
- Acquaintances need to become Friends through relational investment.
- Friends need to become Family through evangelical invitation.
- Family needs to become Missionaries through practical instruction.

When I begin, everyone outside of my church family are strangers to me. But when movement takes place, some will become neighbors. Over a period of time, and as deeper engagement takes place, more and more neighbors will become acquaintances, then friends, and then fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are trained to repeat the process. All of this, in my opinion, is discipleship.

MOVING DOWNWARD FOR GOSPEL ADVANCE

If we are going to make disciples of Jesus Christ, we have to go after “strangers.” Strangers, those far from God, will not be attracted to our Churches attractational efforts or events. We must go to where they are by pursuing them. This begins by having an intentional approach to ordinary living. If we are threads for kingdom fabric, we are to be woven into the heart of the city with everyday rhythms and networking strategies that introduce you to strangers and invite them to become neighbors. These rhythms include where you eat, when you play, how you shop, etc. The networking strategies have to do with purposeful attempts to connect with people on a repeated basis.

Strangers become neighbors when they know who you are and you know who they are. But the knowledge at this point is very superficial. A neighbor becomes an acquaintance when you begin to have a shared life through the integrity of your incarnational efforts. By that, I mean the sincerity of your words and consistency of your actions create a plausibility to neighbors that gives permission to share life through regular greetings, short conversations, etc.

Acquaintances become friends when you make an intentional investment so that the rhythms of life with other people sync up so that a shared life is more than a casual conversation. You are in their homes, and they are in your home. You connect on a regular basis. They open up to you in ways that you understand the story of their lives, and as a good listener, learn how the story of the gospel can find redemptive bridges to cross into their world.

Friends become family when you naturally share with your friends who you are and what is most important to you. You tell them your story and how God has made you new. And through the relationship investment, your friend feels safe asking questions and bringing up objections knowing they are not a project to fix or a sale to make. By seeing the impact of the gospel in your life and sharing the good news in everyday evangelistic conversations, friends are invited to brothers and sisters through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Family members become missionaries when they walk with you through life-on-life practical instruction on what it means to follow Jesus. They become fluent in the gospel and shaped by the reign of Christ when seeking first the kingdom of God. And they wrestle with the struggles and share in the successes together with you while joining you

as a missionary in their neighborhood and city.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STRATEGY

There are two main aspects of this strategy that I want to highlight. First, you notice that most everything happens outside the main structures and/or events of the church. I am all about church gathered and recognize the need to do attractational church well, but very little Great Commission advance, in my opinion, is achieved by the “come and see” approach. Second, some may argue, “Why don’t you just preach to strangers and see them trust Christ then and there?” In other words, why don’t you go straight from stranger to family? From my experience, this kind of leap truncates discipleship and make converts, not disciples the goal. I have seen little lasting fruit from evangelism divorced from relationship, presence, and service to the community.

As I plan out my missional engagement to make disciples of Jesus, I want to evaluate the percentage of my relationship investment for gospel advance. How many strangers have become neighbors? How many neighbors can now be considered acquaintances? How many are moving toward becoming friends? Friends to family? Family to missionaries? Where there is no movement to go deep in the community, we will relegate the Great Commission to the swapping of sheep instead of making new disciples of Jesus. We are to be a pioneering people, not a privileged people. Let us go as those who are sent and preach as those who have a saving message, and love as those who have been adopted by our heavenly Father.

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FELLOWSHIP'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

1 THE TRIUNE GOD

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in His love and in His holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, He perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning. He sustains all things and sovereignly rules over everything, even evil, providentially bringing about His eternal good purposes to redeem a people for Himself and restore His fallen creation, to the praise of His glorious grace.¹

In response to His revelation of Himself, the people of Fellowship worship and adore the only true God with reverence and thanksgiving.

2 REVELATION

We believe that God has graciously disclosed His existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed Himself to fallen human beings in the person of His Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, God has, by His Spirit, graciously disclosed Himself through men in human words. We believe He has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which both record and reveal His saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally "God-breathed" Word of God, which is infallible, authoritative, inerrant, utterly without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of His will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We believe the entirety of Scripture centers about the person and work of Jesus Christ and therefore no portion is properly understood until it leads to Him. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires;

and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and live by the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.²

Because the Bible is God's very revelation, at Fellowship we embrace it as authoritative for all matters in our church and seek to understand and apply it to every aspect of life.

3 CREATION

We believe that God created the entire universe out of nothing. The original creation, initiated by the Father, accomplished by the Son and completed by the Spirit, was very good, accomplishing God's purpose to glorify Himself. In relation to His creation, we believe He is both transcendent (independent of) and immanent (involved in). He is the creator of every living thing "after its kind" and is the driving force in the development of organisms through His intelligent design. His crowning achievement is the creation of human beings.

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in His own image. Adam and Eve belonged to that created order that God Himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, as well as living in holy and devoted fellowship with their maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant ministry in every arena of human affairs. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women. Ultimately, marriage serves as a picture of the union between Christ and His church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways and reflect both His created order and the loving relationship between Christ and the church.³

¹Gen. 1:26, 50:20; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 104:27; Matt. 3:16-17; Col. 1:17 | ²Jer. 1:9; John 14:6; Rom. 10:17; 2Tim 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:24, 3:15b-16

Since God created the universe and everything in it, the people of Fellowship owe all that we are and have to Him and therefore should continually worship and praise Him for His greatness and provision.

4 THE FALL

We believe that man, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original sinless condition—for himself and all his descendants—by falling into sin through Satan’s temptation. As a result, all human beings are born alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually), subject to the power of the devil and condemned finally and irrevocably to death apart from God’s own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to Himself by grace.⁴

At Fellowship we teach the truth about our sinfulness to show our guilt before God and dependence upon His undeserved grace as our sole source of acceptance before Him and our strength for the daily battle against our flesh.

5 THE GOSPEL

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them without any merit in them or anything done by them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that He will one day glorify them—all to the praise of His glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe in the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this Good News is Christological, centering on the cross and resurrection. The gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if His death and resurrection are not central to that proclamation. This Good News is biblical (Christ’s death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins,

and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received and believed, individual persons are saved).⁵

Everything we teach and do at Fellowship must be rooted in this gospel message so that it may be faithfully shared by our people at home and across the world.

6 THE REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to His Father, the eternal Son became human: the word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the mediatorial King, He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God’s sovereignty, and is our high priest and righteous advocate. We believe that by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross He canceled sin, satisfied the wrath of God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By His resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by His Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all His people; by His ascension He has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with Him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else but Jesus, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before Him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.⁶

At Fellowship, Jesus Christ and Him crucified and resurrected is at the very center of our proclamation and worship.

³Gen. 1:2, 26-27, 2:7, 24; John 1:3; Acts 2:17-18, 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 11:3, 12:7; Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:11-15, 3:2; Heb. 11:3 | ⁴Gen. 3:6-7; Rom. 3:23, 5:12, 18-19, 6:23; 2 Cor. 4:3-4, 5:17-19; Eph. 2:1-3, 8-9 | ⁵Mark 1:15; Luk. 24:25-27; Rom. 1:16, 5:1, 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:20-31; 15:3-4; Eph. 1:3-6, 2:8-9

7 THE JUSTIFICATION OF SINNERS

We believe that Christ, by His obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified by their faith in Him. By His sacrifice, He bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By His perfect obedience He satisfied the just demands of God's righteousness on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and His obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.⁷

At Fellowship we believe that a zeal for worship and obedience must flow from this free gift of justification.

8 THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that our salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to His people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by His powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners, awakening them to repentance and faith. In Him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer at conversion, and never departs from the church, nor from the feeblest of saints, but is ever present to testify of Jesus Christ. By the Spirit's agency, believers have been adopted into God's family, and are positionally renewed and sanctified while He grows them in grace daily in this life toward those ends; through His power, they participate in the divine nature, receive His sovereignly distributed gifts, and He grants them the desire to follow and obey Christ. As believers yield their will to His, His fruit begins to grow in them for the world to see. The Holy Spirit is Himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, convicts, equips, revives, comforts, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service. We believe that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first century are available today, manifested

as God sovereignly determines, and are to be pursued and practiced in an orderly manner. The gifts are essential to the mission of the church in the world today.⁸

At Fellowship, we will strive to walk in the power of the Spirit, and not in our flesh, welcoming His power and guidance as we seek His will for our church.

9 THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. The good works that believers walk in, accomplished by faith, constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized until Christ's return to the earth, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world as first fruits of the eventual redemption of all creation. Although Satan is allowed by God to be the current ruler of this world, the kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God that is a reminder to Satan and a hope to the world that the full realization of God's kingdom on the earth is coming in Jesus Christ.⁹

At Fellowship, we will make disciples by God's grace in the dark places of our city, state, and world, embracing the reality that there will always be dark places until the Son of Righteousness rises upon His return.

10 THE CHURCH

We believe that all of God's new covenant people make up one universal church on the earth that is the true bride of Jesus Christ. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only head; thus each "local

⁶Is. 42:1; Luke 1:27-35; John 1:1, 14:2-6, 17:2, 14; Acts 3:22; Rom. 5:19, 6:9; 1 Cor. 1:24, 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:18; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:20, 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:19-20; 1 John 2:1 | ⁷Matt. 26:28; Mark 10:45; Rom. 3:25-26, 5:16; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 4:10 | ⁸John 3:5-8, 14:15-17, 16:5-11; Rom. 5:1-5, 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 2:10-16, 12-14; Gal. 3:1-6, 5:16-26; Eph. 1:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:19-20; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Pet. 1:3-4

church” is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, and therefore is His primary instrument to continue His ministry on the earth, even in its imperfection. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members’ love for one another and for the world. And although Christ has called and gifted certain leaders to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry, every Christ follower is called to be a minister of the gospel to the world around them. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, God’s grace has given His church everything they need to live the life of His perfect kingdom on the earth. Yet even God’s people still war with their flesh to realize this hope on a moment-by-moment basis that will not cease to be a struggle until they see Him face-to-face. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: He has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in Himself one new humanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God’s future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God’s Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.¹⁰

At Fellowship, we will seek to be the fullest expression of God’s future new world by His grace in how we love not only one another, but also anyone who wishes to join our family and walk with Jesus.

11 BAPTISM & THE LORD’S SUPPER

We believe that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself for all who have faith in His saving work. Baptism celebrates our participation in the new covenant community, with our immersion into the baptismal waters serving as an outer sign of our inner renewal and identification with the death and resurrection of our Lord. The Lord’s Supper marks our ongoing participation in the new covenant community, provides a tangible reminder of Christ’s atoning sacrifice, and, by our faith in His completed saving work, provides

spiritual nourishment for our souls. Together, baptism and the Lord’s Supper are a means of grace and our partaking of them signify our unity with other members of Christ’s body, proclaim our submission to the once crucified and now resurrected Christ and the anticipation of His return and of the consummation of all things.¹¹

At Fellowship our desire is to regularly and reverentially proclaim the gospel through baptism and observance of the Lord’s Supper.

12 RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy angels, when He will exercise His role as final Judge, and His kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord Himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of Him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness which will be eternally free from its current cursed state. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and His people will be enthralled by the immediacy of His ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of His glorious grace.¹²

At Fellowship, we look with eager anticipation for the restoration of all things and will be a people that live with that end in mind.

Fellowship Bible Church’s Confession of Faith is adapted from the Confession of Faith approved by the Council of The Gospel Coalition on May 22, 2007, and revised on April 12, 2011. Used by permission of the Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org), Deerfield, IL 60015.

⁹ Matt. 5:13-16, 16:17-19; Mark 1:14-15, 12:28-34; Luke 17:20-21, 22:28-30; John 3:1-3; Acts 1:6-8; Rom. 8:18-25; 1 Cor. 5:3-5; Gal. 5:16-26, 6:9-10; Eph. 2:18-22; Col. 1:13-14; 2 Tim. 4:18; 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Heb. 10:32-39 | ¹⁰ John 10:1-30; 13:34-35; Rom. 7:7-25; 1 Cor. 15:3-19; Eph. 1:3-14, 2:8-22, 4:4-16; 1 John 2:1-6 | ¹¹ Matt. 28:19; Jn. 6:56; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 11:23-26; Col. 2:12 | ¹² Matt. 24:3-51, 25:31-46; Eph. 1:5-6; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; Rev. 6, 20:7-22:21

MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT

We are so thankful that God is leading you to join Fellowship Bible Church. We are excited to join with you in a shared commitment to one another. Fellowship's mission is to make disciples who live by God's grace and for His glory at home and across the world. We are committed to following Jesus Christ and bringing glory to His name as we seek to live out together the Fellowship mission and values. Specifically, we are committing by the power of the Holy Spirit and through the grace found in Jesus Christ to be connected to God and others, live transformed in attitude and action, and multiply disciples together at home and across the world. This shared commitment to one another gets expressed in the following ways:

AS A CHURCH FELLOWSHIP WILL:

- Care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth, and love (Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28).
- Equip members of the church for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
- Appoint Elders according to the criteria assigned to them in Scripture (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-13).
- Protect the church against false teachers and teachings (Matthew 7:15; 1 Timothy 1:3-7).
- Seek to lead our church community and steward her resources to the best of our ability by following the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- Restore lovingly those ensnared by sin, for the glory of God and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1).
- Set an example and join members in living out the mission and values of Fellowship as outlined below (Titus 2:7-8; 1 Timothy 4:12).

As a member of Fellowship, I affirm Fellowship's doctrinal beliefs and acknowledge that my salvation is in Jesus Christ alone and by His grace, I will:

CONNECT

BE CONNECTED WITH GOD AND OTHERS

- Spend time with God through Scripture reading, prayer, and other spiritual practices.
- Pursue spiritual community and growth with others in a Discipleship Group.
- Participate in corporate worship within Fellowship.
- Diligently deal biblically with conflict and refuse gossip.

TRANSFORM

BE TRANSFORMED IN ATTITUDE AND ACTION

- Follow Christ's example in my personal holiness.
- Serve the Body of Fellowship by using my spiritual gifts for God's glory.
- Be or have been baptized as a believer of Christ.
- Financially support the ministry of Fellowship with my resources.

MULTIPLY

BE A DISCIPLE WHO MULTIPLIES DISCIPLES

- Seek to humbly submit all aspects of my life to Jesus' words "Follow Me."
- Live out and share the gospel both at home and across the world.
- Build discipleship relationships with others equipping and empowering them to do the same.
- Pursue intentional relationships with non-Christians in my sphere of influence.

I RECOGNIZE THESE COMMITMENTS ARE NOT REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN, BUT RATHER WHAT IT IS TO BE A MEMBER OF FELLOWSHIP. I UNDERSTAND THAT BEING A MEMBER OF FELLOWSHIP MEANS I WILL PURSUE THESE COMMITMENTS DEPENDENT UPON GRACE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MEMBERS ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD WHILE BEING SUBMITTED TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ELDERS.

DATE _____

MEMBER (PRINT) _____ PASTOR/ELDER (PRINT) _____

SIGNATURE _____ PASTOR/ELDER SIGNATURE _____

BAPTISM FAQ'S

1 I HAVE NEVER BEEN BAPTIZED DOES THAT MEAN I AM NOT SAVED?

Ephesians 2:8-9 teaches that salvation occurs by an act of God's grace that we receive through faith. There is no work that we perform that contributes to our salvation. Since baptism is something that we do (or is done to us), it cannot contribute to our salvation. So, if you believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and have repented of your life apart from Him, then you are saved. Nothing can be added to this wonderful truth.

2 SO, IF BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE ME, WHY IS IT SUCH A BIG DEAL?

Even though baptism does not "save" you, it is still very important for a Christian to be baptized. Here is why:

- Jesus Himself commanded that we be baptized (Matthew 28:19), so baptism is an act of obedience;
- Just as under the old covenant (i.e., the law) circumcision was an outer sign that Israel was the chosen people of God, baptism is a sign under the new covenant of grace that we are God's chosen people;
- Baptism proclaims to a watching world that we have died to our sinful passions in this world and have been raised from spiritual death to walk in newness of life with Christ (Romans 6:4);
- It signifies our union with Christ and communion with other believers (Ephesians 4:5);
- Baptism is a means of grace that God has given us so that by remembering our baptism we also remember the awesome power of God that has been available to us for our ongoing sanctification (Colossians 2:12).

3 DOES FELLOWSHIP PRACTICE INFANT BAPTISM?

While some Christian denominations do practice infant baptism (sometimes called paedobaptism), Fellowship does not. Our doctrinal conviction is that the best evidence of baptism practiced in the New Testament church (such as the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39) points to baptism occurring after someone has come to faith (which is called credobaptism). If you were baptized as an infant or if you were previously baptized before you came to faith in Christ, we would invite you to prayerfully consider being baptized as a professing believer.

4 DOES FELLOWSHIP PRACTICE BAPTISM BY IMMERSION OR BY SPRINKLING/POURING?

As with infant baptisms, there are many differences among Protestant churches concerning the mode of baptism (immersion vs. sprinkling/pouring). The Greek verb for baptize found in the New Testament writings can, based upon the context, mean either total immersion of the body or possibly immersing only a part. At Fellowship, we hold to total immersion of the body into the water as the best practice for baptism because it seems most faithful to Scripture and seems most consistent with the symbolism that baptism points to in identifying with Christ's burial and resurrection.

WHAT IS CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND RESTORATION? *THEOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND PRACTICE AT FELLOWSHIP*

INTRODUCTION: DISCIPLINE IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL

In the beginning, man and woman were created by God for His glory and for our greatest joy. By design, our greatest delight and truest satisfaction were to be found in trusting and treasuring God.

Though man was originally created good, the Scriptures reveal that he eventually and willingly rebelled against his Creator. Therefore, he has ever since suffered the consequences, condemnation and curses of what has been called "the fall." This fall did not merely change mankind's environment, but also his very essence. By this one original sin, the nature of humanity was altered, and we became sinners, natural enemies of God, predisposed to hate and rebel against Him. We were enslaved to the tyranny of sin and the death which it brings, and we were exposed to the just wrath of God.

Though man suppressed and exchanged true worship of the Creator for praise of created things, God's plans to unite His glory and our joy were not thwarted at the fall. Rather, He has been patiently and purposefully working to restore what was broken. This restoration has been most clearly and fully revealed through the person and work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. In the perfect obedience of His life, His death for our sins, and His resurrection, Christ introduced reconciliation into the world. Through

treasuring and trusting in His finished work, we once again have relationship with our Creator.

Though we who believe have experienced true redemption and reconciliation, the fullness of our hope awaits us in the future. We are longing for the promise of Christ's return, our resurrection and the restoration of creation. Until then, we still struggle with the residue of our old self, the flesh. This struggle is not to be lived out alone, but rather in the context of community, particularly the local church. We are called by God to watch out for ourselves and those whom we love lest we be enticed by the deceitful promises of sin. We will never truly love discipline until we hate sin.

UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLINE

Love demands discipline. On a personal level, love for the Lord demands a response in which the desires of the flesh are slowly and methodically put to death. On the corporate level, love for the Lord and for His church requires a response in which sin is dealt with as God has intended. What loving parent would allow their child to play with fire? Would we expect anything different from our heavenly Father (Colossians 1:28-29)?

Discipleship and the discipline through which it occurs is defined as maturity in Christ. This is accomplished primarily through teaching and warning. We might divide these two aspects of discipleship into two necessary components: those which are formative and those which are restorative.

- Formative discipline involves teaching, preaching, prayer, study, fasting and various other forms of engagement or abstinence to fill us with the Holy Spirit and remind us of 1) our ongoing need to repent and believe in the gospel, and 2) its free provision to us through our faith in Christ.
- Restorative discipline occurs in the context of community and involves warnings, rebukes, exhortation and correction intending to prevent or to correct explicit, willful, unrepentant sin within the church.

Both are a means of training us toward our goal of maturity in Christ. Neither personal formative discipline nor corporate restorative discipline are easy or necessarily enjoyable at the time. However, both are means that God uses to shape us to become like Christ. We must be trained by discipline in order to grow into maturity.

The Scriptures are full of wisdom regarding discipline. The writer of Hebrews teaches us that God's children are disciplined by Him in one form or another. Sometimes He sends tribulation and persecution or removes worldly comforts to foster humility, holiness and faith in us. Sometimes He disciplines through the work of the local church. It is this context of corporate discipline in the local church body with which this document is concerned. Therefore, the term "church discipline" will include the various steps of the community of faith coming alongside a professing believer to exhort, encourage, warn and rebuke him in loving hope for his or her restoration and movement toward Christian maturity.

Our hope, however, is that formative discipline through the work of the Holy Spirit will keep us from the need for the restorative forms. Regardless of the form, we will certainly be disciplined and God will use it to accomplish His loving purposes (Hebrews 12:5-11).

AN INDIVIDUAL CALLING

A significant part of the Christian life calls for the believer to be intentional, disciplined and self-controlled in seeking and submitting to the Lord through personal devotion and practice (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Timothy 1:7). However, our flesh is opposed to our desire for holiness (Galatians 5:16-17), and we must therefore be diligent to fight the flesh by walking in the Spirit (Romans 8:12-14) as children of God. By His grace, we can grow in our ability to live by faith through the Spirit's sanctifying work (1 Peter 1:2) as we relate to God and others through the realities of life.

A CORPORATE CALLING

Given the deceitfulness of sin, all of us need the most basic level of church discipline that involves our brothers and sisters speaking truth in love to us (Ephesians 4:15, 29) because we are often blind to our own sinfulness (Matthew 7:3-5). We need one another to believe and live out the gospel—this is God's design. Every church member is called to exercise their individual gifts to build up the body in love (1 Corinthians 12). Every member is called to labor and struggle with all energy to help one another in the church to grow in conformity to Christ (Colossians 1:28-29). This corporate calling is overseen through the shepherding and spiritual authority of the overseers of the local church, the elders (1 Peter 5:2).

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Our call to live out the gospel takes place within the realm of spiritual warfare. The kingdom of evil is ever-present and always working against the kingdom of God. The difficulties we face in life are ultimately "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Our "adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8) and seeks to keep us living in fear and not by faith. Therefore, we need to love one another through encouragement, rebuke and correction since we are all prone to wander from our God.

THE CONTEXT OF DISCIPLINE

The situations addressed in this statement are those of explicit, willful, unrepentant sin. Far too often individuals and churches engage in the disciplinary process in situations where the issue is not willfully unrepentant sinful behavior. This must not be the case. However, we must not let the fact that some would misappropriate Scripture to distract us from our responsibility to apply it as the Lord has directed.

This distinction between dealing with issues of preference and those of unrepentant sin is made explicit in Romans 14:10 and 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 where Paul's admonitions appear contradictory. In Romans 14, Paul writes that we should not judge our brothers. In 1 Corinthians 5, he writes that we should judge our brothers. Given that Scripture is not self-contradictory, we know that Paul's inspired interpretation of events must reflect differing circumstances.

The contexts of both passages clearly indicate that the

situations are quite distinct. Romans 14 is dealing with principles of preference while 1 Corinthians 5 is dealing with that which has been clearly revealed as unrepentant sin. This distinction must be maintained in the way in which individuals and Fellowship Bible Church interpret and apply Scripture today. The issues with which this paper will be concerned are those of explicit, willful, unrepentant sin, not preference or conscience.

THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE

Why should the church engage in corporate discipline? Five reasons stand out as most pertinent:

WE LOVE THE LORD

Our God is a holy God whose eyes can look on no evil (Habakkuk 1:13). Though none of us will fully comprehend the Lord this side of glory, we recognize that our love for Him is informed by our understanding of who He is. We cannot love Him Whom we do not know. Part of the call to love God is to abhor that which is opposed to Him. Failure to fully appreciate the utter horror of sin is evidence of an incomplete understanding of the holiness of God.

Sin is a horrid thing. Through just one sin death, depravity, corruption and disease have reigned upon the earth for thousands of years. It always has devastating effects and all of us constantly live in that awareness.

As believers, we have great hope in no longer being enslaved to sin or its curse. We have been granted liberty through the free gift of God's grace. However, this liberty does not grant us license to sin. Rather, those who have tasted of the grace of God should be all the more adamant to oppose the sinful flesh. While we recognize that we will not see perfection until Christ returns, such acknowledgment should not lull us into an apathetic view of sin. Ultimately sin must become bitter to us because our sin necessitated the death of our savior, Jesus Christ – we were bought with a price, the blood of the spotless lamb (1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The church must recover a healthy view of the holiness of God and our responsibility to flee from our natural passions and desires. We would do well to remember the many admonitions of Hebrews to "pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it" (Hebrews 2:1), and to "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." (Hebrews 3:12), and to realize that "any one of you may seem to have come

short of it...Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:1, 11).

We do not believe that any true believer can ultimately fall away from God's grace. However, we must also confess that there exists the very real possibility that some will find false assurance of salvation. This is surely terrifying (Hebrews 10:26-31).

These texts are not intended to relegate believers to perpetual fear, but rather to rouse the sluggish and undisciplined from their slumber. If a so-called believer is engaged in willful, persistent and unrepentant sin, the Scriptures say that his honest expectation should be judgment and punishment. That does not mean that he will receive such, for all true believers will ultimately persevere, but it does mean that he or she has no evidence upon which to base his or her claims of safety. Unrepentant sin in the believer must be dealt with by repentance. Failure to repent might be evidence of an unregenerate heart which is unable to turn from sin (Hebrews 12:15-17). Love for God demands the desire to be made holy in the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

WE LOVE OUR MEMBERS

The motivation behind church discipline should always be the hope of the restoration of the wayward brother or sister. Discipline is not the end, but rather is the means to the expected end of repentance and reconciliation in the life of the true believer (James 5:19-20).

In loving our brethren, we must remember to allow the Scriptures to define the means and manners of our love. While our culture might tell us that acceptance is love, the Scriptures are clear that true love means a call to holiness and life through the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 John 5:2).

Attempting to love in a way that neglects Scripture not only evidences a lack of faith in Scripture and the Author of such Scripture, but also an ignorance as to the meaning of genuine love for the brother or sister. We must love in a way that is consistent with the biblical revelation. The Lord created the method of church discipline as His intended means of sanctifying the church and her individual members. This is how He intends to sanctify His people and therefore failure on our part to carry out His desires is decidedly unloving. Love for each member demands that we engage in discipline for their good and not let them sit idly in their willful, unrepentant sin and pretend as if nothing is wrong (Galatians 6:1, 2 Corinthians 7:8-13).

WE LOVE HIS CHURCH

Not only are we called to love our individual members, but also to love the whole assembly who gather together in the name of the Lord. To allow for unrepentant and persistent sin to leaven the congregation should certainly be a concern which drives and informs our decisions in church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Love for the church demands that we discipline ourselves for the sake of purity.

WE LOVE NON-BELIEVERS

Those who profess belief in Christ and yet continue in unrepentant sin misrepresent the nature of grace and the very faith that they claim. We want non-believers to know that the Christian faith does not merely gloss over hypocrisy and pretending. We take seriously the calls of our Lord (Romans 6:1-4).

WE LOVE THE SCRIPTURES

As we will discuss in the following sections, the Lord has specifically revealed the method through which the church is expected to deal with sin in its body. Failing to obey God's commands is sin. We must be careful lest we ourselves fall into sin merely by allowing others to engage in it (Psalm 119:9-16 and I Timothy 3:16). Love for the Scriptures demands that we discipline in accordance with its instructions.

FELLOWSHIP MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENT

The membership process at Fellowship includes the signing of our Membership Commitment. This commitment outlines the respective responsibilities of elders and members toward the church body. Particularly relevant are the following responsibilities:

ELDERS' COMMITMENT

- To care for the church and seek her growth in grace, truth and love (Ephesians 4:15-16; Colossians 1:28).
- To restore lovingly through a process of church discipline and restoration those ensnared by sin, for the glory of God and the health of the church as a whole (Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1).

MEMBERS' COMMITMENT

- To submit to the discipline of God through His Holy Spirit by following the biblical process for church discipline where sin is evident in another with the hope that such discipline will result in repentance and restoration. This includes receiving righteous

and loving discipline when approached biblically by fellow believers (Psalm 141:5; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11).

- Submit to discipline and restoration by the church when ensnared in sin (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).
- To submit to the elders and other appointed leaders of the church and be diligent to strive for unity and peace within the Church (Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).
- To submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21).

Given that these responsibilities in the Scriptures are applicable to all believers, Fellowship Bible Church will reserve the right to exercise loving discipline outside of its official membership for those who regularly attend.

PRACTICING CHURCH DISCIPLINE AT FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship Bible Church believes that the only way to deal with sin and love the sinner is through the means revealed in Scripture. Our desire to obey the Lord thus necessitates that we follow His Word.

Therefore, discipline in the life of Fellowship Bible Church will follow the steps outlined in Table 1 – The Steps and Dynamics of Church Discipline. Except in rather extreme and extenuating circumstances (e.g. an abused child would not have to privately confront his or her abuser in order to facilitate the first step of discipline), the process should be followed with faithfulness and expectation of God's Spirit to work through His intended means.

Members of Fellowship are expected to follow the biblical process of discipline as outlined in this paper. Therefore, the first step in instances of overt sin should be a private meeting to express concerns and correct any misunderstandings. We cannot stress strongly enough the need for confidentiality. Our practice as a church is to keep the group of people involved in a discipline process as small as possible for as long as possible.

In the event that the sinning brother or sister is unrepentant, members are encouraged to ask a witness to accompany him or her for another meeting. If this too fails, the member is then asked to contact a pastor at Fellowship for further instructions on the church's response. Functionally, the 3rd and 4th steps of the process will be carried out in the

presence of two or more recognized pastors, at least one of whom being an elder.

While we never hope to need to arrive at these final steps, we fully believe that engaging in such is the best way to love a wayward brother or sister. Therefore, we will unapologetically obey the Scriptures as they apply in such instances. While such action may rail against our ideas of love and compassion, we trust that God will ultimately show Himself faithful and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

PRACTICING CHURCH RESTORATION AT FELLOWSHIP

When a member has confessed their sin and demonstrated genuine repentance, it then becomes necessary to set in motion a plan for restoration. (2 Corinthians 2:5-8) This plan will be put in writing for the sake of clarity. Fellowship Pastors and Elders are typically involved in this process that includes the following steps:

Setting expectations regarding the terms of restoration, the process and the resultant outcomes, the long-term effects and implications including any resultant disqualification from future ministry. It is important that others affected by the sin be involved and informed throughout the process. Where the sin is against another person, their cooperation and involvement is necessary. Particularly in marital situations, the spouse needs to be engaged through the process.

Establishing a willingness to submit to accountability for the purpose of active repentance, pursuing restoration, and seeking godly counsel and submitting to authority. In each situation the specifics of how this is accomplished will vary.

Forming a restoration team to assist in the process of restoration with Elder and Pastor team leadership, oversight, and accountability. The team of 3-4 members will be chosen from the person's established community or known relationships who are committed to the restoration process and able to give time attention to this person and assess credible progress.

The purpose of the restoration team is to provide accountability and encouragement. This group may not be qualified to offer the kind of counseling that may be necessary. In some situations, it may be necessary to secure professional counseling for the individual and those directly affected by their sin. Where finances may

be an impediment to receiving counseling, Fellowship will provide assistance through its benevolence fund.

Finally, there should be a time for follow up and evaluation. This could be a great time to celebrate with the one who has been restored and help them see and appreciate all that God has done in their life. God has done incredible things among Fellowship members who have participated in the restoration process. We highly encourage it in order to actively experience the gospel and His grace in seemingly impossible sin situations.

A NEED FOR HUMILITY

God's word has ordained the discipline of believers as a means He uses for the building up of the saints. But we must confess that at times the church has failed to undertake this responsibility with a spirit of humility appropriate for fellow sinners who are equally in need of God's grace. The way in which we have interacted with those ensnared in sin has at times been hurtful and has driven them from us rather than creating in them a thirst to be reconciled to us. For that we are truly heartbroken and cry out to God in our own need for forgiveness. Whenever we engage in church discipline we would be mindful to remember the parable of the tax collector and Pharisee in Luke 18:10-14, where our Lord reminded us that it was the brokenness and cry for mercy of the tax collector that revealed true righteousness, not the religious boastings of the Pharisee.

Exercising church discipline is a burden for the believer that is meant to sacrificially serve other believers. It is a burden that we cannot carry in our flesh, but must be carried by the Spirit of Christ in us who makes all burdens light. If we exercise discipline in keeping with the Holy Spirit, those ensnared by sin will be drawn to Him who is in us. If we exercise discipline in our flesh, they will be wounded and repulsed by us.

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THE STEPS & DYNAMICS OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
Progressive steps of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17)	<i>"If your brother sins (against you), go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother."</i>	<i>"But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses."</i>	<i>"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church."</i>	<i>"And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."</i>
Guiding Scriptures	Galatians 6:1; Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 17:3-4	Titus 1:13; Ephesians 4:25	1 Timothy 5:20	1 Corinthians 5:4-13; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Luke 15:3-8; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Timothy 1:18-20
Level of Discipline	Informal Discipline	Informal Discipline	Formal Church Discipline	Formal Church Discipline
Who is involved?	Only the persons directly involved.	Persons directly involved plus 1-2 others who can be biblically discerning and objective.	Those already involved plus church leadership at elder discretion. Depending on the sphere of influence of the unwilling party, this could involve a few elders/pastors to the entire church.	The offender's community must be informed of the general nature of the offense and ways they can minister to those directly involved.
When should this step of church discipline occur?	Step 1 should be occurring every day in gospel-driven communities and relationships.	Step 2 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen and repent after being biblically approached according to the directions of Step 1.	Step 3 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen despite the call to faith and repentance from 2 or more people.	Step 4 occurs when a person (or persons) refuses to listen despite the call to faith and repentance from church leaders and involved community through a variety of approaches and repeated attempts.
Step Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine your own actions and motivations and confess and repent if necessary. Prayerfully consider how to approach the person. Deal one-on-one as soon possible after an offense is recognized. Speak truth in love, give grace for the moment. Be humble, gentle and patient. Depending on the nature of the offense, you might try a variety of approaches and repeated attempts before proceeding to the next step. Avoid gossip and slander. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on 1-2 discerning and objective people who can understand the situation and help guide involved parties to live out the gospel by faith—perhaps a ministry leader or mutual friend. May be helpful to meet in a neutral location. Multiple meetings and a variety of approaches may be necessary to achieve incremental change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Church leadership will investigate by meeting with those involved—listening and asking questions of the involved parties and those they brought into the situation. Community is crucial at this step—all involved need to be kept updated so that sin can be exposed and the gospel can be ministered in a consistent and loving way. Multiple meetings and a variety of approaches may be necessary to achieve incremental change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unrepentant person is given final warning, explaining action taken with this last step of church discipline. The offender can no longer be affirmed as a believer in Christ. Excluded from communion. Excluded from D Groups; and other Fellowship sponsored activities (but allowed to participate in restorative ministries such as ReNew). Expelled from membership. May be asked to no longer attend weekly services, depending on elders' discretion. Members are informed of offense and asked to not associate with the person as if nothing is wrong but call the unrepentant person to faith and repentance in the gospel. Elders no longer have responsibility for the unrepentant soul—is given over to the flesh, the world, and Satan.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

This outline may be used as a reference point when meeting with an elder regarding membership at Fellowship. When thinking through your testimony, you are simply sharing your God story, the way God has worked in your life as you have trusted in Him for the forgiveness of your sins.

MY LIFE BEFORE I KNEW CHRIST

WHAT YOU WERE LIKE

HOW I RECEIVED CHRIST

THE GOSPEL

MY LIFE SINCE RECEIVING CHRIST

HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT? HOW DO YOU STILL STRUGGLE WITH SIN?

WHAT IS SOME OF THE FRUIT YOU SEE IN YOUR LIFE? HOW ARE YOU GROWING IN YOUR LOVE FOR JESUS?

