



**CHRIST** the  
**KING** CHURCH

New Member Guide



## NEW MEMBER CLASS

During this membership class we will be discussing the fundamentals of the gospel and how we apply it in our lives, in our church, and on mission in our city.

God created us for his glory. We are not here by accident. Everything has a purpose. Your life has a purpose. As a church, our desire is to live out our common purpose in Christ together. This is how we glorify God.

The local church is central to God's plan for the world, even though we are sinful and messed up people. God's grace is so rich and full that he chose to have rebellious, hard-hearted people like us to play a key role in his work to redeem the world.

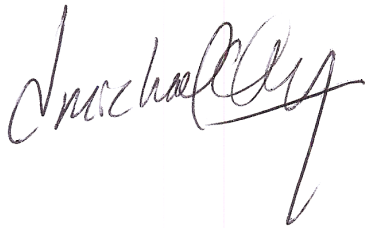
Our aim in this class is to show you the foundation for everything we do as a church and how this plays out in our community. Our vision for this church is not to merely meet on Sundays and go home. We want to launch a movement of the gospel as we announce God's kingdom in our city.

This membership class should give you everything you need to know about why we do what we do. We'll cover this in two main sections: **Whole Gospel** (Cross, Life, and Kingdom) and **Whole Church** (worshipers, family, learners, missionaries, and servants).

I'm glad you have decided to take this step with us. If you decide to become a member of CTK, you are locking arms with others who share this dream. It won't happen overnight, but through years of hard work and dedication, I believe God will use us to do some amazing things in this city.

I am humbled and blessed to have the privilege to serve you as the lead pastor of Christ the King Church.

May God grant us the strength and courage to be found faithful till the end.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Michael Clary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long vertical stroke extending downwards from the end.

D. Michael Clary

Lead Pastor, Christ the King Church

## MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

There are three steps to the membership process: 1) Class, 2) Conversation, and 3) Commitment.

The first step is the membership **class**. We ask that you read this material, attend the class, and be prepared to ask questions and participate in the discussion.

The next step is having a **conversation** with an elder, City Group leader, or other church representative. The purpose of this conversation is to get to know you, hear your story, and answer any questions you may have. We love gathering stories of how God saves people and what He's doing in people's lives, so we'll ask about your relationship with God and what we can do to assist in your growth.

We also require that every church member be a baptized Christian. If you haven't been baptized yet, or if you have any questions about our views on baptism, this is the time to let us know!

The final step is a time of **commitment** where we formalize our commitments to each other and to the church. This will be indicated by signing the New Member Covenant.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITMENTS

We have five commitments that we ask every member to make to this church family.

The first commitment is **unity**. Disunity can quickly wreck a church, so we commit to keeping our sights set on the bigger picture of what God has called us to and not allow smaller, secondary matters to divide us.

The second commitment is to being **present**. We unapologetically believe that being committed to a church family means that we need to meet together regularly.

The third commitment is to **giving**. It is the joy of every Christian to be financially invested in God's kingdom through the local church.

The fourth commitment is to **prayer**. We need to pray not only for each other and our own needs, but also for the needs of others in our church and for the church's leaders.

The fifth commitment is to **follow** the leadership of the church. We believe that God appoints men to be elders over the congregation and the congregation needs to submit to the authority that God has ordained.

# WHOLE GOSPEL

The late pastor and author A. W. Tozer said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”<sup>1</sup> Everyone has thoughts or beliefs about God. *Everyone*. Even the most hardened atheist who mocks faith has a religious commitment of denying God’s existence. In other words, everyone is a theologian. Since we all have thoughts about God, and since God is the most important person that exists, then we should make sure we are thinking about him correctly. Everything depends on this. It is the most important thing about us.

One of the most significant duties of the church, then, is to make its members good theologians. The church should equip people with biblical thoughts about God so that those people are able to persevere in their faith. Christians will face lots of difficult times in their lives: the death of loved ones, sickness and disease, job loss, personal injuries and accidents, persecution for their beliefs, rebellious and obstinate children, strife within marriages, and so on. Good theology is a firm anchor as we go through life.

Some people are turned off by theology because it can lead to pride and a judgmental spirit. Others don’t like theology because they think it’s too impersonal. And some people just find theology boring and uninteresting. But this is not true theology. True theology actually does the opposite. True theology should lead us to be humble before God, loving him and loving each other, and trusting more and more in God’s good character. Whenever we’re thinking about God, asking questions about him, or praying or asking him for things, we’re doing theology.

Jesus called this the Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). We were created to love God and to love people. Good theology enables us to do this well.

## *Gospel Centrality*

The gospel is the good news that *God saves sinners*. Those three words mean a lot. “God” does the work, “saves” is what God does, and “sinners” is for whom God does this.

The gospel tells us the most important things about ourselves and about God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (a catechism is a teaching tool that helps summarize the Christian faith), originally published in 1649, states that our primary purpose as human beings is “to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.”<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, God is gracious and compassionate. Even though sin has corrupted our ability to glorify and enjoy God, he chose to rescue us from sin rather than destroy us for it. God initiated a plan that would fully and finally deal with evil and restore his people to fellowship with him. This is what the gospel is all about. Jesus’ death on the cross made the way for God to save us from sin and repair his fractured world.

This is why the gospel is central to everything we do. Only through the gospel can we even begin to live out the purpose for which God created us.

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<sup>1</sup> Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*.

<sup>2</sup> Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), *Book of Confessions* (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 2007), 175.

## The Trinity

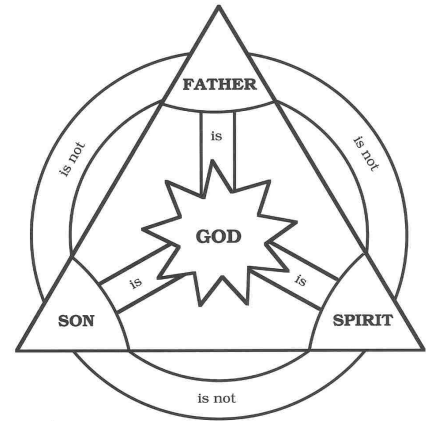
To understand the gospel we need to know who God is. One of the most important beliefs is that God is a “triune God” – there is one God and yet three persons. This doctrine is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, but it is still true and important. It is a most treasured and valuable doctrine, and if we deny the trinity we are also, in effect, denying the gospel.

The trinity is the Bible’s teaching that, “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, God the Father is fully God, Jesus Christ is fully God, and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) is fully God. All three are fully God, yet there is only one God.

These are the three main assertions of the doctrine of the trinity:

1. God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is one God.

God is not divided into three parts, nor are there three different gods. This is a wonderful mystery. When we encounter mind-blowing truths like this, we can conclude that “such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain” (Psalm 139:6 NIV). Even though we cannot fully understand it, we cannot deny its truth.



## God is Creator

The Bible teaches that we owe our existence to God and God alone. God is a creative God. He loves his creation, and he created everything for a purpose. Many at this point would ask the question, “Why? Why did God create us? Why is there something rather than nothing?” To best understand why God created us, we need first to understand why God did *not* create us.

Everything begins and ends with God; he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 21:6). All things are from him, and through him, and to him (Romans 11:33-36). He is perfectly and infinitely happy in himself.

Pastor and theologian John Piper says it this way, “In everything [God] does, His purpose is to preserve and display [His] glory... He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it would be wrong to think that God created us out of any sort of loneliness, boredom, or dissatisfaction with His own existence. God does not *need* us to glorify him, as if our doing so or not doing so could either add value or remove value from God. He is supremely valuable, whether we recognize it or not.

So then, why did God bother to create us at all? As stated earlier, we were created to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Human beings are the apex of God’s creation<sup>5</sup>, and he designed us for the great task of glorifying him. So how do we glorify God? We do this by enjoying him and worshipping him.

<sup>3</sup> Grudem, 226.

<sup>4</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, Or.: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Humans are the apex in terms of God’s love and affection. The angels are greater in terms of their power. See Psalm 8:5.

Worship is the heartfelt human response to the greatness of God. Worship stirs up in our hearts the enjoyment of God.

The gospel cancels our record of sin that stands against us and restores us to our created purpose of glorifying and enjoying God. There is no life outside the gospel. There is no purpose outside the gospel. There is no church outside the gospel. If there is no gospel, all humanity is destined for hell.

That is why the gospel is central to everything we do. At Christ the King Church you will hear about the gospel a lot. We are a gospel-centered church. This means that everything we do is enabled by the grace of God and is for his glory.

We pray that being a part of Christ the King Church will challenge you and lead you into greater spiritual maturity because you will be directed to the gospel in everything you do and everything the church does.

### *Gospel Perspectives*

Even though the gospel is simple, it is also profound. It has been described as shallow enough for a child to wade through and deep enough for an elephant to swim in.

Picture it this way. Imagine you wanted to really understand the ocean. One way would be to go to the beach, take off your shoes, and watch the waves pound against the shore and wash over your feet. Or, you could fly over the ocean in an airplane and marvel at the vast expanse of water in every direction. Or, you could get into a submarine and see all that lies beneath. The gospel is like this. It is so enormous in its scope that it's helpful to examine it from different points of view.<sup>6</sup>

Many Christians are prone to see the gospel through only one perspective. We will look at three perspectives which will enable us to get a more comprehensive idea of what Jesus has accomplished and what that means for us. These perspectives help us to see the "Whole Gospel." We will call these three perspectives 1)Cross, 2)Life, and 3)Kingdom.

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<sup>6</sup> There's a big theological word for this called "Tri-perspectivalism." Triperspectivalism has been championed by theologian John Frame.

# Cross

*This gospel perspective is all about the objective truth of the Bible.* It is concerned with doctrinal clarity and biblical precision because God has charged us to “contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

The apostle Paul wrote this in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8:

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 rose 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.

In other words, Paul was preaching a true message about events that really happened. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are the focal point of all history. Jesus really died and Jesus really was raised from the dead. Furthermore, Paul says that if these things are not true facts of history, “our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (vs 14). Whenever he preaches the gospel, this is what he’s talking about. Paul always preaches the *cross* (1 Corinthians 1:23).

This message of the truth of the gospel has been entrusted to the church. The church has the responsibility to “guard the good deposit” (2 Timothy 1:14). This means that the Bible’s teachings about God, human beings, Jesus, sin, forgiveness, love, holiness, and so on must be faithfully preserved. Paul also tells Timothy to “preach the word” because some will be tempted to “turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

Here is a summary of the basic objective truths that we learn from Bible about the gospel message.<sup>7</sup>

*Fact #1: God is holy.*

Of all the attributes of God mentioned in Scripture, God’s holiness stands above all the rest. God’s holiness is the premiere attribute of his character in Scripture; it is his very “selfhood.”<sup>8</sup> From God’s holiness derives other attributes in Scripture: his love is a holy love; his mercy is a holy mercy; his justice is a holy justice. When human beings consider who God is, this should be foremost in our minds. In the book of Revelation, John observes the four living creatures calling out to God, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8)

*Fact #2: Man is sinful and separated from God.*

The fact of God’s awesome and infinite holiness is what makes the sinfulness of humanity so deadly serious. The sin of humanity has corrupted everything on this planet. Nothing on earth has escaped the damaging effects of the fall. The best way to comprehend the fallenness of humanity is to catch a glimpse of the holiness of God. John Calvin once



<sup>7</sup> This outline has been adapted from *The Four Spiritual Laws* by Bill Bright.

<sup>8</sup> D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 477.



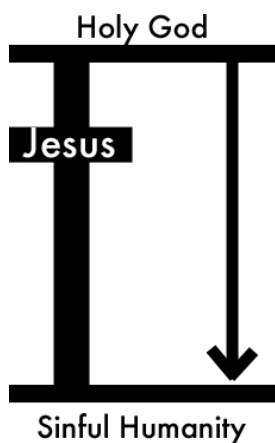
wrote that we humans are quite impressed with ourselves until we comprehend God's holiness.<sup>9</sup>

Isaiah 64:6 says that "our righteous deeds are like filthy rags." Romans says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23) and that "the wages of sin is death" (6:23). What does that mean for us? Since all have sinned and the wages of sin is death, every human that has ever lived is on spiritual death row. No one can escape this reality. God must get involved and rescue us from our sin because there is nothing we can do.

Sin can be either active rebellion against God or passive indifference to Him.<sup>10</sup> Some people rebel against God by breaking all the rules and living in open sin. Other people rebel by hiding their sin and pretending to be good by following the rules even though their hearts haven't changed. Some people just don't care.

*Fact #3: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through him alone can our sins be atoned for and forgiven.*

God's holiness does not make him unapproachable, however. He is a seeking God, who desires to be known. But his holiness demands that we approach him only through the provisions that he has established. Approaching God apart from these provisions is dangerous and even deadly.



Since we are all on spiritual death row, we need a rescuer to come and free us from our prison of sin. The only way for us to be freed and forgiven is for someone to die in our place, someone to go to death row for us.

Jesus Christ is the only one uniquely qualified to be the mediator between a Holy God and sinful human beings, because he is both fully God and fully man. John 1:14 says that God himself "became flesh." Jesus is the embodiment of God; he is the God-Man. We deserved to die for our sin, but instead Jesus himself died for us as a substitute. And since he is God, in the flesh, he alone can satisfactorily die for the sins of the world.

Romans 5:8 says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." But not even death could hold him down. God is the source of all life. Even though he experienced death, he arose again on the third day after his crucifixion. First Corinthians 15 says that "Christ died for our sins... he was buried [and] he was raised on the third day."

*Fact #4: We must respond to this offer of grace by personally placing our faith in Christ and by continually submitting our lives to him.*

Many people will agree to the first three facts that have been stated above, but agreeing is not the same as believing by faith. That requires a commitment of trust from the heart. This is the responsibility of every individual. A person's sin is not forgiven based on one's religious experience, or the faith of one's parents, or one's baptism as an infant, or one's good deeds, or one's being nice to others. A person is forgiven when he or she individually recognizes that their only hope in life is found in their savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus called this "new birth" or being "born again" (John 3). Paul calls this "justification by faith." Christian scholars call this "conversion." Many other Christians call this "salvation" or being "saved." They are all talking about the same thing. Regardless of the name by which it is called, Christians

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Bright, *The Four Spiritual Laws*.

have always acknowledged that when a person becomes a Christian they have committed themselves to Jesus and to live their life in allegiance to him. And God indwells that person and brings about growth in his or her life.

At Christ the King Church, we often refer to this as “conversion.” The Bible teaches that genuine conversion is always accompanied by 1) confession of sin and repentance and 2) good works, provided by God (Ephesians 2:10) and enabled by the Holy Spirit.

This reality of new birth can be experienced by people in a number of ways, depending on what circumstances God uses to call them to faith. For some, they have the benefit of Christian parents who instruct them in faith and they gradually, over time make that faith their own. These people may not be able to pinpoint a moment of conversion because they feel that they have always believed. For others the experience of conversion is more instantaneous. There is, for them, a definite and identifiable moment when they placed their faith in Christ and began to follow him. The important thing is not the past experience but the present reality of faith in Jesus and the commitment to follow him in the future.

# Life

*This gospel perspective is all about the experience of joy and freedom in Christ because of belief in the gospel. The facts and objective truths of the gospel mentioned above are important because they are the words of life (John 6:68)!*

In 1 Corinthians 15:10 the apostle Paul writes, “by the grace of God I am what I am.” Here, he is not speaking of the gospel simply in terms of a list of beliefs that he holds. Paul has a new identity. Before he became a Christian, he was a self-righteous man who murdered and persecuted Christians for a living. Jesus did not simply adjust a few beliefs to make Paul a Christian. Jesus changed his entire life and gave him a new self. Paul now experienced the gospel as a *new life*.

## *Growing in Grace*

God speaks through Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil... Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days” (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20). This was ultimately fulfilled in the gospel.

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The abundant life is the life of joy and freedom that we experience when we believe the gospel and respond with a heart of genuine love for God. But the thief, Satan, wants to steal, kill, and destroy that life. The key to experiencing this abundant life is to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). This means we are to understand more and more how blindingly pure and holy God is, while also seeing more and more how sinful we are. And then we “grow in grace,” meaning the amazing grace of a holy God comes more into focus as we realize what he’s rescued us from.

When we truly believe this our hearts are stirred to worship him, to love him, to find our significance and identity in him, and to desire to be more like him. Because we are completely loved and forgiven, our hearts are changed. Our motives are changed. The gospel gives us a new capacity to love and serve God and each other. This is the abundant life of freedom, joy, and love that Jesus promised. Christian growth means our love is growing and our hearts are more tender to God because we are more aware of his grace.

The thief, however, wants to steal this joy from us. He wants to kill and destroy the abundant life we were meant to experience in Christ. He does this by minimizing the grace of God, by shrinking the cross. There are two ways that God’s grace can be minimized. The first is by believing God is somehow less holy than he really is, and imagining that by our moral effort we can gain his love. The second way is by believing that we are less sinful than we really are. We do this by seeing sin only on the surface – refusing to look deeper into our hearts and being aware of the deep sickness within. In either case, we are robbed of the freedom, joy and love of the gospel because God’s grace is seen to be somehow smaller than it really is.

## *Our Experience of Grace*

Even though all Christians have experienced God’s grace, we all have different sin patterns and heart idols that still prevent us from growing in grace. We still need to fight off the rebellion in our hearts that wants to find our joy and love in something other than Christ.

For example, one person may believe that her joy will be complete when the man she loves wants to commit to her. Another person may feel like he is a loser unless he earns a six-figure salary and has

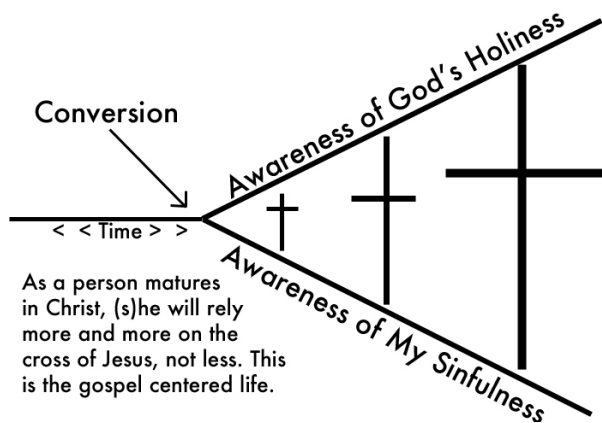
all the trappings of success. A student may feel she is only valuable when she is accepted to the degree program she wants. An activist feels like his life is ruined because his cause is failing. A mother feels defeated because her identity is wrapped up in her children and they are rebellious.

All of these are ways that people look for their ultimate joy in something *other than Christ*.

These desires mentioned above are not wrong in themselves, but we were created to find our highest joy and love in God alone, which is achieved through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the gospel, our standing before God is complete and secure. Our heart response to him is to believe at the deepest possible level that our life is found truly and ultimately in Christ.

When we experience the abundant life Jesus promised, that means we allow our belief in him to control our thoughts and feelings and behaviors. We build our life around that belief. Christ is our life. When we do, we are free. We experience joy. And our love for God grows and grows.

### *The Gospel-Centered Life*



The life of the Christian is marked by his or her desire to best reflect God's glory through obedience to Christ and by continually removing sin from his or her life. It has been said that, for the growing Christian, all of life is repentance.<sup>11</sup>

This is growth and maturity in Christ: we find more areas of our lives to surrender to Christ, more areas of sin to repent, and find forgiveness and healing in the gospel. Through the gospel, we find our purpose in life restored. We get to worship God. We get to obey God. We glorify God. We find forgiveness of sins. Jesus purchased our lives when he died on the cross.

John 15:5-9 says:

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Keller article, "All of Life is Repentance." This is a summary statement of the first of Martin Luther's 95 Theses. Luther said, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'repent,' he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

# Kingdom

*This gospel perspective is all about the implications of the gospel throughout the entire universe.*

It is common for Christians to think that the gospel is all about Jesus forgiving people of their sins. While that is certainly true, the gospel accomplishes something much grander. Through the gospel, God is restoring his sovereign rule over every square inch of the universe. The Bible calls this the “kingdom of God.” Jesus’ first words recorded in the Gospel of Mark say, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15).

Paul explains the gospel of the kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26:

“[Jesus] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death...”

Jesus’ death and resurrection was not merely for the salvation for sinners. Jesus’ death accomplished the cosmic reordering of the power structures of the universe. God’s kingdom had been usurped when Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the garden, but Jesus restored the kingdom through his victory at the resurrection. Simply put, all God’s promises come true through Jesus. Jesus fixes everything that has gone wrong.

To illustrate this, let’s revisit the gospel story once again, this time through the perspective of the kingdom. We’ll tell this story in four acts.

**Act One: Creation.** As we have already observed, God created everything and created it good. God gave his first human beings, Adam and Eve, a job to do. They were to make lots of babies (“be fruitful and multiply”) and they were to rule over planet earth (“have dominion”). Adam and Eve were, quite literally, King and Queen over the whole earth. They ruled over this planet/kingdom on God’s behalf.

God gave them a garden sanctuary to live in called Eden. The King and Queen lived in their garden as God’s rulers.<sup>12</sup> According to this plan, Adam and Eve would bear more children and cultivate more land, and the boundaries of their kingdom would expand, and they would take dominion over more of the earth. Finally, they would have literally filled the earth with human worshipers, living in an earth-sized garden of Eden, working to further reflect God’s glory through their own ingenuity and creative endeavors.

That’s the way it was supposed to be. This was the original “kingdom of God.” God is High King; Adam and Eve serve them as Vice-regents.

**Act Two: The Fall.** This part sucks. The King and Queen of the earth committed high treason against the High King. They declared their independence from God’s rule over them. The results were catastrophic. Everything that has ever gone wrong in your life can trace its way back to this one event.

Adam was supposed to rule the world as head of his wife and his family, and they were to have dominion over earth and its inhabitants, including all the animals (Genesis 1:26). The fall turned everything upside down. The serpent (Satan disguised as an animal) deceived the woman and ruled her, and the woman persuaded and ruled her husband.

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<sup>12</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 25-26. Beale’s argument is that the Garden of Eden is the first earthly temple of God’s presence. Adam is actually a “priest-king” and the garden is a “temple.”

In other words, the order of the world turned to chaos. As a result, rebellion was cemented into the fabric of our lives. Men are now either passive and irresponsible or oppressive and tyrannical. Women will give birth to children through great pain. She will distrust her husband's leadership and try to subvert and usurp him. The earth fights back as well: crops are difficult to produce, animals are wild and cruel, and children are difficult to raise (!).

The spiritual results of the fall are much worse. But even in the very beginning, when these events occurred, God promised that he would initiate a course of action that would one day undo the fall and its curse.<sup>13</sup>

**Act Three: Redemption.** If God wanted to, he could have justly destroyed everything right there and started over. But he didn't. Instead, he determined to allow his redemptive plan to unfold within the framework of sinful humanity. Human beings continued to multiply and build cities and develop technologies and so on, all the while God set apart a people for himself and put into motion the events that would lead up to the cross of Christ.

God's plan slowly unfolded, year after year, and along the way he taught his people important lessons about who he is. He is a God who makes and keeps promises (Genesis 12). He is a God who frees his people from captivity (Exodus). He is a holy God who expects his people to be holy (Exodus 20). He is a God who provides a means of forgiveness when his people sin (Leviticus). He is a God who gives his people a homeland in Israel (Joshua). He is a God who provides a righteous king (1-2 Samuel). He is a God who warns of danger (the Prophets). He is a God who disciplines his children because he loves them (the Exile).

But all of these are actually mini-stories that anticipate the Great Story, the Gospel. Jesus completes these other mini-stories. Jesus is the true promise that God kept to save his people. Jesus frees us from ultimate captivity. Jesus is the only man who was ever perfectly holy. Jesus is the true means of forgiveness by his death on the cross. Jesus is our perfectly righteous King. Jesus warns of the dangers of sin but ultimately faces the danger of God's judgment on our behalf. Jesus gives us the true homeland in heaven.

All of these things are true because Jesus laid down his life. His body was broken, his blood was spilled. And while he hung on the cross, the collective agony of all the sin and wickedness and judgment of the entire fractured universe was dumped on him. His body was abused, tortured, afflicted, and crucified, but his soul bore an even greater burden than we can possibly comprehend.

**Act Four: Restoration.** This is where the effects of the gospel are played out in a trillion different ways throughout all of humanity. The curse of God's wrath from the fall (Genesis 3) has now been absorbed by Christ. Since Jesus didn't stay dead in the tomb, he rose on the third day bringing resurrection power. Jesus wins. Sin is defeated. Satan is defeated. The kingdom of God has now been inaugurated and will not stop until Christ returns to completely bring the whole kingdom of God to the world.

This is why our church is called "Christ the King Church." Jesus is not dead. He is alive and reigns in power as Sovereign King over all. And he reigns over us in our little church.

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<sup>13</sup> This promise is that a woman will one day bear an "offspring" that shall crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Theologians call this the proto-evangelion, or "first gospel."

## *Implications of the Kingdom*

When we say that Jesus died to forgive us of our sins, that's true, but it's not the whole story. Jesus died to restore his kingdom, which includes us, but also means that Jesus is extending God's rule throughout the universe.

Jesus is all about conquering the tiniest pockets of rebellion against his rule everywhere it exists and bringing everything into "subjection under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:27). The famous Christmas hymn "Joy to the World" talks about God's rule extending as "far as the curse is found."<sup>14</sup> This is the business of the kingdom: everywhere the effects of sin are found, God is bringing it into subjection under him.

Let's put it in simple terms: Jesus wins. His kingdom has come. And his business is for God's kingdom to be played out "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

The kingdom is larger than your quiet time, Sunday worship, and other Christian activities, although it most certainly involves these things. The kingdom also involves the "comprehensive healing of the entire cosmos."<sup>15</sup> Colossians 1:19-20 says that Jesus came to "reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross." The scope of reconciliation is "all things." God reorders his world and establishes justice "far as the curse is found."

The good news of the gospel is that the "kingdom is near!" The decisive battle against Satan and sin has been won. God's rule has been re-established. Jesus is the King, and our King has ultimately achieved his victory through the gospel.

### *What Does that Mean for Us?*

It is important for Christians to know what God wants us to do in light of his kingdom. We did not bring about the kingdom of God, nor can we advance the kingdom of God. What we can do, however, is bear witness to it. Two pastors, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, have a helpful illustration for this. They wrote:

The kingdom is what it is. It does not expand. It does not increase. It does not grow. But the kingdom can break in more and more. Think of it like the sun. When the clouds part on a cloudy day we don't say, "the sun has grown." We say, "the sun has broken through." Our view of the sun has changed or obstacles to the sun have been removed, but we have not changed the sun. The sun does not depend on us. We do not bring the sun or act upon it. The sun can appear. Its warmth can be felt or stifled. But the sun does not grow.<sup>16</sup>

The kingdom of God is something accomplished by God through Jesus Christ. We did not accomplish it. Our job is merely to announce it. We announce God's kingdom through our words and our works.

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<sup>14</sup> Christmas Hymn, "Joy to the World."

<sup>15</sup> Corbett, Steve and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... And Yourself*. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, "What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission." 2011, Crossway Books, p 134.

# WHOLE CHURCH

Jesus told his disciples that the “keys of the Kingdom” were given to the church. He also said, “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

God has reclaimed his kingdom through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and he has delegated to his church the authority to act on his behalf. What a massive responsibility! As the church, our decisions and activities in announcing God’s kingdom are binding in heaven! One day, the kingdom of God will be completely restored when Jesus returns. The church’s responsibility is to announce the present reality of God’s kingdom through our *words* and our *works*.

There are many things that Christians can do to live out the values of the kingdom. Through our words and our works, Jesus says that we are like a “city on a hill” (Matthew 5:14), the place where the light of God’s kingdom shines through the darkness of the world.

There are many things that the church *can* do, but one thing that stands above them all as something the church *must* do. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us this that the church’s mission is to *make disciples* until he returns. This means that the church’s primary task is to “win people to Christ and build them up in Christ.”<sup>17</sup> Jesus uniquely calls, qualifies, and equips the church to do this.

As the church fulfills her primary mission to make disciples, those disciples obey Jesus and live lives in the world that announce the present reality of God’s kingdom. The church announces the kingdom of God by calling people everywhere around the world to repent of their sins, receive by faith the forgiveness offered in Christ, and live lives of faithful obedience.

As Christians grow in Christ and faithfully obey him in every part of their lives, we further bear witness to God’s kingdom. We announce the kingdom by calling men to lead with strength and courage in the church and in their homes. We announce the kingdom when mothers and fathers raise their children to love Jesus with their whole hearts. We announce the kingdom by serving those in poverty and other ministries of mercy. We announce the kingdom by caring for fatherless and hurting children. We announce the kingdom by helping those in pain through medicine and healing. We announce the kingdom by promoting justice and equity in our communities. We announce the kingdom through promoting human dignity and opposing oppression. We announce the kingdom by standing courageously against moral corruption in our world. We announce the kingdom by supporting disaster relief globally. We announce the kingdom by working to reduce human trafficking.

As Christians do these things, we “shine like lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15), bearing witness to God’s present rule in our lives and our community. At Christ the King Church, however, our top priority must always be making disciples – *reaching* people with the gospel of Christ, and *teaching* people to live for Christ.

We do not, however, have the ability to do this on our own strength. We are selfish and sinful, but the gospel gives us a new identity in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the Holy Spirit empowers us for a new kind of life. The gospel transforms us by first telling us *who we are*, and then shows us *what to do*.

We believe there are five “Gospel Identities” that guide our understanding of the Christian life: we are worshipers, family, learners, servants, and missionaries.

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<sup>17</sup>Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert, “What is the Mission of the Church?,” 63.



# We are Worshipers

*“True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” –John 4:23*

## *Whole Life Worship*

Although worship is often regarded as something we do on Sunday mornings, God actually calls us to worship with our whole lives. Christians are, by definition, worshipers. Romans 12:1-2 says:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Worship begins with the mercies of God, and whole life worship is fueled by the mercies of God. We receive God’s mercy through faith in Jesus Christ and God joyfully welcomes us into his presence. God’s mercy is the fountain of worship—filling us with the assurance of God’s love and presence with us.

Our whole life worship, being founded upon the mercies of God, leads us into obedience in all areas of life. Paul said, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice.” Your response to God’s mercy is to lay down your life, completely and unreservedly. That’s what it means to be a worshiper. You get all of God. God gets all of you.

What does this mean in your day-to-day living? It means your whole life is a worship service! As you live in obedience to God, you are actually performing acts of “spiritual worship.” As a husband lovingly serves his wife by doing the dishes with a joyful heart, he is performing his spiritual worship. When a woman speaks a kind word about someone and resists the temptation to gossip, she is performing her spiritual worship.

Of all the five core identities discussed in this membership material, worship permeates and intersects them all, because all of our Christian obedience, from the lofty to the mundane, has spiritual value to God. From the tired mother changing another diaper, to the missionary serving in India, God sees every act of joyful obedience rooted in his mercy as spiritual worship.

Since all true worship of God flows from his mercy, we continually need to call our hearts and minds back to him. We need constant bulletins to remind our hearts that God loves us based on his grace, and not based on our moral effort. That’s the “*be transformed by the renewal of your mind*” part. That’s why God calls us to gather weekly for what we call worship gatherings. It’s the time set aside in our week to be reminded of God’s mercy, which fuels our worship throughout the rest of our lives.

## *Gathered Worship*

When we gather for corporate worship services at CTK, our primary purpose is to renew our minds by calling us back to the mercies of God. Second Peter 1:9 indicates that a Christian who is disobedient and not growing in Christ has “forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.” That person’s deepest need is to be called by to God’s mercy—he needs to have his mind renewed. The various things we do in our weekly worship gatherings are all designed to drive us to a whole life of worship flowing from the mercies of God.

Throughout biblical history, God's people have set aside one day per week to rest and gather together for worship. In the Ten Commandments, God's people were required to observe the Sabbath, which was a day set aside for rest and worship. God himself rested on the seventh day in the Creation account of Genesis.

We still need this. In our busy lives, we badly need to establish rhythms of rest and worship. Hebrews 10:24-25 makes it plain, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." We need to "meet together" for the purpose of worshiping God and edifying one another.

In other words, the weekly worship gathering is a non-negotiable for the Christian life.

**Liturgy.** Every church has a basic way of conducting their worship services. They may not call it a liturgy, but that's what it is. At CTK, we make an intentional effort to shape our worship service around the truths of God's mercy towards us. Simply put, we want the gospel to be front and center in our services.

The rhythms of our liturgy help us to rehearse gospel truths together. We always begin with a *call to worship*, which reminds us of God's worthiness of worship and his generous invitation to us to come worship him. The *confession* shows us that we are continually in need of his mercy, but the *assurance of pardon* reminds us that he has already forgiven our sins because of the work of Christ. As God's forgiven people, we take time to *welcome* one another as family and enjoy some conversation. After the sermon, we *respond* to God's word through communion, prayer, giving, and singing. We conclude with a *benediction* as we are sent out for another week of whole life worship.

By the time we have concluded our service, we will have heard the gospel preached, sung the gospel to one another, proclaimed the gospel in our readings, and tasted the gospel in communion. Our liturgy is a multisensory feast on the mercies of God!

**Preaching.** True churches are always marked by faithful preaching of God's Word.<sup>18</sup> Preachers are essentially "brokers of the Word of God."<sup>19</sup> Thus, preaching God's Word will be given center stage in our worship gatherings. Our sermons will be about God. Jesus is the hero and we will spend our time looking at him, adoring him, worshiping him, and preaching him.

**Seeker intelligible.** Since a common form of evangelism is to invite non-Christian friends to church, we should strive to make sure our gatherings are accessible for them. At Christ the King Church, we work toward a "seeker intelligible" approach to our gatherings. This means that we will be sensitive and hospitable to those who visit by avoiding pompous Christian insider language, over-the-top stylized prayers, and evangelical jargon. We will not mock non-believers or impugn their doubts. We will treat everyone with dignity and respect, even if they do not agree with us. We will also not be shy about speaking hard truths when appropriate.

**Musical style.** Worship music is a very important means of instructing God's people and stirring up devotion. No one leaves a gathering singing the sermon, but the music grips our hearts and compels us to join in. Music is a gift of God; he intends music to be enjoyed, appreciated, and done with excellence. Theologian Jonathan Edwards believed that God commanded us to sing because singing gives words and melody to the affections of our hearts.<sup>20</sup> Corporate worship is not a recital time for

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<sup>18</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>19</sup> John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*, 82.

<sup>20</sup> Edwards, *Affections*, 44.

people to show off their abilities (or lack thereof!). We should expect congregational singing to lift our hearts in the worship of God in spirit and truth.

Here's the reality: different people are edified by different musical styles. Everybody has an opinion on music. We believe that the musical style should suit the tastes of the congregation generally, since it is a vehicle for their instruction. Some people will love the music at our church; others, not so much. We will strive to edify everyone with the music but everyone must also recognize that we can't make everyone happy. Therefore the musical style may vary depending on how our congregation develops.

# We are Family

*“Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” –Matthew 12:50*

God has always viewed his people as a family. God’s original promise to Abraham was to bless “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3) through him. But in Christ, we have a *new* family identity. Family is no longer biological, but spiritual. Before we became Christians, we were God’s enemies. But through Christ, we have received “adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:6).

Family is all about belonging. In a family, you belong to other people and other people belong to you. This is important because God has created us fundamentally as relational beings, as he himself is fundamentally relational. First Corinthians 12:27 says, “Now you (plural) are the body of Christ and individually (singular) members of it.”

God is our Father because he adopted us into the household of God and he gave us all one Spirit. This means that Christ unites us where we were formerly divided, and surpasses anything that formerly united us.

This has huge implications for the church. The church is the “people of God, the community and body of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>21</sup> The church is a body, not a building; we are a people, not a place.

But when you’ve got people, you’ve got problems. In the New Testament times, the racial and cultural tension between Jews and Gentiles was sky high. The Jews believed that Gentiles were unclean and had only limited association with them. Even the practice of circumcision was designed to set people apart physically.

But then many Jews *and* many Gentiles became Christians. All of the sudden, these former enemies became part of the same spiritual family. They were now joined together by the Spirit of God, whether they liked it or not. Their “Jewishness” or “Gentileness” meant nothing to God. This was a great challenge because they had been raised from youth to hate one another. It required a deep belief in the gospel and power of the Spirit to be unified.

The apostle Paul wrote that Jews and Gentiles were once alienated from each other, but now Jesus “has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility” (Ephesians 2:14) that stood between them. They were formerly two different peoples, but in Christ they became “one new man in place of the two” (vs 15).

Nowadays, the dividing lines are different. Being Jew or Gentile doesn’t matter much any more. The lines of division now occur along socio-economic lines, racial and ethnic lines, and generational lines. For example, some churches are upper middle class and others poor. Some churches are “black churches” and some are “white churches.” There are young people churches and old people churches. And within any particular church, sinful, small-minded conflicts over secondary matters disrupts the church’s unity and paralyzes the church’s mission.

At Christ the King Church, we strive for greater unity in our local church, and with other gospel minded churches in our city.

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<sup>21</sup> Sinclair B. Ferguson and J.I. Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 140.

## *The Unity and Diversity of Our Family*

Unity has been defined as the “degree of freedom from divisions among true Christians.”<sup>22</sup> Christians have a sad history of dividing over just about anything you can imagine, even though the Bible stresses again and again how much we should be united in Christ.

Diversity was actually a biblical concept long before it became a hip idea in our culture. Biblical diversity occurs when many different kinds of people from different nations, races, languages, genders, ages, economic backgrounds and education levels all worship and adore the same Lord.

Revelation 5:9-10 captures this idea beautifully. In this text, we are given a glimpse into the worship of heaven and John (the author of Revelation) describes who is there to worship God. He describes the great multitude who are singing this song to Jesus:

Worthy are you to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God  
from every tribe and language and people and nation,  
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.

Obviously, not every church can reflect this type of diversity, because not every neighborhood contains this type of diversity. We *cannot* control who is receptive to the gospel. But we *can* control the efforts we make to reach our neighbors. Our focus at CTK will be reaching the whole city, not particular incomes or ethnicities.

In God’s family, ethnic and economic division is prohibited. Paul addresses this in Galatians 3:28 by saying, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The book of James addresses economic favoritism when he says, “my brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism” (2:1).

Christ the King Church’s Mosaic ministry is dedicated to helping us be a church that is committed to ethnic and economic diversity.

## *Conflict in Our Family*

Being unified as a church doesn’t mean we always agree. Far from it. Sometimes churches maintain unity through necessarily conflict. But then again, some conflict is totally *unnecessary*. For example, a church should not divide over carpet color, but a church should fight to preserve the core doctrines of the gospel. A church should not divide over musical style, but should fight over the doctrine of Christ’s atonement at the cross.

Even then, there are many issues that are very important to individual Christians, and there should be room in the church for vigorous debate about these issues. But these debates should not reach the level of disunity or division within the church. For example, some parents may choose to homeschool their children, some may send their children to Christian schools, and some to public schools. All these parents may make these decisions for good reason and rooted in their Christian convictions. These parents are free to discuss and defend their particular views on the matter. They should not, however, create division and alienate other parents who view things differently.

## *When Should We Fight?*

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<sup>22</sup> Grudem.

Sigmund Freud once identified what he called the “narcissism of minor differences.”<sup>23</sup> This is the tendency of human beings who have many important things in common to gravitate towards their minor differences in an effort to gain an edge over one another. Author and theologian John Frame has noted that many conflicts in the church over particular matters of doctrine stem from the personal immaturity and gracelessness of the people arguing.<sup>24</sup>

Here’s our basic principle: We have open-handed issues and closed-handed issues. Open-handed issues are issues where we can have unity even though we disagree. Closed-handed issues are issues we are willing to fight for and vigorously defend. These are issues that are central to the gospel and must therefore be defended from those who oppose them.

The following chart illustrates the continuum of when it is better to fight and when it is better to disagree with love and charity. Many if not most of our experiences will fall in the middle section, where we hold deep convictions but these differences do not merit division. The middle and the left of the chart are open-handed issues. In such cases, we are free to disagree but we are nonetheless required to demonstrate charity and humility. On the far right of the chart, we find those issues that are most central to the gospel. These are closed-handed issues and are non-negotiable articles of the Christian faith.

For example, if someone denies the deity of Christ, this jeopardizes the gospel since our sin requires a payment that only God himself can provide. Thus, this is a *gospel issue* and we must fight and defend the doctrine of Christ’s full deity and full humanity. The apostle Paul himself shows us how important this is, when he states that “even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). Essentially, Paul says that the gospel he preached is a matter of heaven and hell; anyone (including himself!) who contradicts it can go to hell. Those are fighting words.

But suppose two people disagree over the use of tongues (middle of the chart). This is not central to the gospel, even though this belief is precious and valuable to many. Godly Christians should feel the freedom to engage in debate and make a case with one another for their respective positions based on Scripture. But in the midst of these arguments we must give others the benefit of the doubt and be willing to love one another even if our disputes remain unresolved. There’s nothing wrong with disagreement as long as we argue with humility and our anger does not lead us into sin (Ephesians 4:26).

Some issues are clearly grounded in the personal preferences of individuals. We are free to have our preferences, of course, but not use those preferences as a test of fellowship with other Christians or malign them for having different preferences. Many churches and even denominations have been split because of the selfish desires of a particular person or group that has an axe to grind. If the issue at stake is far removed from the gospel, then it is most likely selfishly motivated and the instigator needs to grow up and get over it.

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<sup>23</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1929.

<sup>24</sup>John Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, (1987), 21.

This chart summarizes our position at Christ the King Church.



Based on the gospel

## Proximity to the Gospel

← More central to the gospel

→ Less central to the gospel



Based on personal preferences

### Unity: the gospel is at stake

*These are the core beliefs of the Christian faith; to deny them is to deny a central tenet of the gospel. We will defend these doctrines passionately, and openly oppose anyone who denies them. We will not seek unity or fellowship with other Christians or churches who hold different views on these matters.*

*Galatians 2:10-21*

*All Ctk elders agree on these doctrines and commit to defend them.*

### Examples:

Trinity: Father, Son and Spirit  
 Holiness of God  
 Person and Work of Christ  
 Sinfulness of Humanity  
 Necessity of repentance  
**Authority of Scripture**  
 The atonement of Christ  
 Necessity of faith in Christ  
 Salvation by grace through faith

### Charity: these are important yet secondary to the gospel

*Christians will have legitimate disagreements on these important matters, and should feel free to passionately promote their views while being gracious and respectful in disagreement. We seek unity and enjoy fellowship with other Christians and other churches who hold different views on these matters.*

*Philippians 4:2-4*

*There is general agreement among our elders on these doctrines.*

### Examples:

Types of Church Government  
 Views about baptism  
 End Times theology  
 Tongues/Sign gifts  
 Calvinism/Arminianism  
**Covenantalism/Dispensationalism**  
 Frequency of communion  
 Young Earth/Old Earth Creationism

### Flexibility: these are not worth dividing over

*Since these issues are based more on one's personal preferences than anything else, Ctk will allow a great degree of flexibility and unity on these matters. These issues require flexibility and wisdom through Scripture, prayer, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 14:5-12*

*Ctk elders hold various views on these topics.*

### Examples:

Musical style  
 Preaching style  
 Sunday school vs. small groups  
 Decor of meeting space  
 Political parties and affiliations  
**Personal grievances**  
 Views about alcohol/tobacco use  
 Single Issue Church people  
 Views on home vs. public schooling

# We are Learners

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” –Colossians 3:16*

The gospel is a message that needs to be taught and understood and studied deeply. Paul writes that we are to “learn Christ,” being “taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:20). Christians have always been and should always be learners. The Bible tells us to “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

When we commit ourselves to learning, we are bringing our thoughts into subjection to Jesus, as we are instructed to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). In other words, learning is telling Jesus, “You are Lord of my mind.”

Many Christians are tempted to discredit the discipline of learning, assuming that it’s not very spiritual. Eastern religions even encourage people to empty their minds. But God has designed us to crave learning and knowledge. We love God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and *mind*. The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about this: “fools despise wisdom” (1:7), “fools hate knowledge” (1:22), “the Lord gives wisdom” (2:6), knowledge is greater than “choice gold” (8:10), “the wise lay up knowledge” (10:14), and “apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge” (23:12).

The object of our learning is God himself. God is an endless ocean to be explored, a vast universe for us to discover and love. He is not merely a subject to be studied, God is a person to be known. God has equipped us with the unique capability to know him, and he invites us to come and learn of him.

In other words, *every Christian is a learner*. One important caveat must be made, however. The goal of learning is not mere acquisition of facts, but knowing God and following him as Lord. The biblical notion of *wisdom* is both knowing God and applying that knowledge to all of life. A person can have a genius IQ and an encyclopedic knowledge of Bible trivia, but if this knowledge does not lead him to love and obey God, he is considered a first-rate fool.

None of us has this all figured out. Nobody has all the answers. But God has created us to learn from each other, from our life experiences, from his creation, from parents and teachers, from good songs, and so on. And by God’s grace we also have the benefit to learn from redemptive and church history.

## *The Bible*

Although God has revealed himself in various ways through his creation (Romans 1:20-21), he has revealed himself most fully and perfectly through Jesus Christ (John 1:1-2). In the few decades immediately following the ministry of Jesus, the written accounts of Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection was circulated throughout the early church. These writings to the early church were compiled together with the Old Testament writings (the Old Testament is the record of God’s work in the world before the time of Christ). This whole collection of writings, both Old and New Testaments, are now called the Bible.

As learners, every Christian can and should grow by gaining a greater knowledge of God through the Bible. The Bible gives us everything we need to know in order to believe in God’s saving plan for us through Christ and commit ourselves fully to him in joyful obedience.



The Bible is our highest authority and primary source for the knowledge of God. Individually, we learn from the Bible what God expects of us and how to worship God. As a church, we humbly submit to its authority. The authority of the church and its elders are derived from Scripture.

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) describes it like this:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.<sup>25</sup>

The Bible contains 66 books<sup>26</sup>, it is without errors in the original manuscripts,<sup>27</sup> and it never fails to accomplish what God intends (Isaiah 55:11).

### *The Four Characteristics of the Bible*

There are four characteristics of the Bible that are especially important for us to remember as Christians and members of Christ the King Church.<sup>28</sup>

**Authority.** The final court of appeals in our church is always the word of God. "All the words in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God."<sup>29</sup> God's holy character is one of truth, as Jesus himself claimed to be "the truth" (John 14:6). God does not lie and he never speaks falsely.

**Clarity.** "The Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God's help and being willing to follow it."<sup>30</sup> The Bible's essential message of the gospel and redemption in Christ are clear and we cannot fault God for our lack of understanding it. Some parts of the Bible will be clearer than others, but the Bible continually asserts that it is meant to be understood and applied.

**Necessity.** "The Bible is necessary for knowing the gospel, for maintaining spiritual life, and for knowing God's will, but is not necessary for knowing that God exists or for knowing something about God's character and moral laws."<sup>31</sup> In other words, we do not need the Bible to be able to surmise that there is a God, and that he is holy and good, but we do need the Bible to know the gospel and his plan of redemption. Thus, no Bible means no Jesus, and no Jesus means no forgiveness of sin.

**Sufficiency.** "Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly."<sup>32</sup> We do not need new revelations from God to be able

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<sup>25</sup> Baptist Faith and Message, <http://www.sbc.net/BFM/bfm2000.asp>

<sup>26</sup> The books of the apocrypha, which are included in the Roman Catholic bible, are helpful books of history but should not be regarded as part of God's Word.

<sup>27</sup> The original manuscripts, called "autographs," no longer exist but only copies of them still exist.

<sup>28</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 73-140.

<sup>29</sup> Grudem, 73.

<sup>30</sup> Grudem, 108.

<sup>31</sup> Grudem, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Grudem, 127.

to know and obey God, or any other thing. He has given us the Bible, which is sufficient to guide a person to faith in Jesus and a life of obedience to God.

# We are Missionaries

*“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.” –Mark 16:15*

*“You will be my witnesses.” –Acts 1:8*

Shortly before Jesus was taken up from earth, he charged his disciples with the task of carrying the gospel message to the every corner of the planet. This charge is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20:

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.

In Acts 1:8 he said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.”

In today’s language, people who make a living sharing the gospel with others are called *missionaries*. We believe that every Christian is a missionary in some form or other. Jesus did not commission armies to conquer foreign lands, but instead he conquers peoples’ hearts as they are persuaded by the gospel. Whenever you tell someone about your love for Jesus, God’s kingdom is being announced. Whenever someone places their faith in Christ, God’s kingdom conquers their heart.

Of all the five core identities we live by at Christ the King Church, this one is temporary. Mission is a temporary necessity in a world that doesn’t know Jesus. Pastor John Piper says it this way:

Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever.<sup>33</sup>

## *The Kingdom of God through Making Disciples*

At Christ the King Church, our primary task as missionaries is making disciples of Christ through evangelism and discipleship. If a person is not a Christian, then we help them to become a disciple by sharing the gospel with them. If a person is a Christian, then we help them to become a more faithful disciple by showing how the gospel transforms every area of their life. A disciple is a subject of God’s kingdom. He or she has been defeated by Christ and is now loyal to the King of Kings. Jesus leads them in a “triumphal procession” (2 Corinthians 2:14), like a conquering hero.

Disciples are born and made more faithful by believing and applying the gospel. We can think of making disciples in three ways. (Since we are doing battle with Satan and working on behalf of God’s kingdom, I will use a war metaphor to explain this.)

**The Air War.** In modern warfare, oftentimes conflicts will begin with an air campaign to weaken the enemy before sending in ground troops. Our air war is preaching and teaching the gospel through our weekly Sunday morning worship gatherings. The gospel is preached and applied to the gathered assembly. Non-Christians are welcome at our worship gatherings where they are invited into the community of faith.

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<sup>33</sup> John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*.

**The Ground War.** Our ground war is going to be in smaller and more relational gatherings such as City Groups or similar small groups or classes. This is where much of the business of talking about and applying Scripture to our lives takes place. It is more personal and relational. Non-believers are welcome at these groups where they can have a front row seat into the life of a believing community.

**Hand-to-Hand Combat.** Our most intensely personal form of gospel ministry is even smaller. This is often called “personal discipleship,” but may take different forms at CTK. This may be two (or three or four) people meeting together on their own initiative to edify each other and hold each other accountable. People can meet one another for coffee, hang out while watching sports, or whatever. When we are engaging in hand-to-hand combat with non-believers, this is called personal evangelism (not that we ever want to be rude or needlessly offensive with others!).

Therefore, all three levels of disciple-making at Christ the King Church are useful for Christians to grow in Christ and for non-Christians to become disciples.

### *The Missional Matrix*

For our mission as a church to be most effective, we need to view our mission through the Missional Matrix.<sup>34</sup> The Missional Matrix includes six different areas to consider for maximum kingdom impact.

**Location.** A church’s mission needs to be anchored in a particular location to be effective. For example, Christ the King Church has a desire to reach all of Cincinnati, but that location is too broad and complex to be effective. Therefore, we have adopted a campus/church planting strategy to localize our mission to particular neighborhoods. As of this writing, CTK has two campuses, Uptown and Mt. Washington. But as our church grows and God continues to provide more leaders, we hope to continue to localize our mission to many more neighborhoods, blanketing this city with gospel churches and campuses.

**Vocation.** Most people have a particular vocation where they spend most of their time and energy, whether it be a job, working with one’s children from home, or school. And every Christian is responsible for representing the kingdom of God in his or her vocation. If a Christian is a physician, then he or she must be a uniquely *Christian* physician. He or she must find ways to integrate their faith with their work. If someone is a student, then he or she must strive to glorify God in their studies by integrating faith and schoolwork. Similarly, the children of Christian parents should always be instructed in the gospel, thus being missionaries in their own homes.

**Restoration.** This is the mindset of the individual in everything we do. Christians do things in a Christian way with a heart set on God’s glory. Restoration is an attempt, in God’s power, to shine the light of God’s glory in word and deed in our neighborhoods. Restoration refers to the redemptive motive we bring to all of our activities.

**Participation.** Christians have at different times isolated themselves from the world around them. This should not be so. It is good for individual Christians and churches to have a public involvement in organizations that represent and benefit their communities. Examples of this are homeowner associations, civic boards and community councils, school boards, and so forth. This is where God’s blessings to us begin to have ripple effects throughout our communities. Individual Christians and churches can learn about the needs of their communities and meaningfully contribute to the flourishing of everyone in their community when they participate in these organizations.

**Recreation.** Christians and churches can also contribute to local flourishing in a community by enjoying life and helping others do the same. We can show love and invest in our communities by

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<sup>34</sup>Joseph Turner, a pastor in Houston, TX, coined this phrase and authored its basic concept.

shopping or eating out in our community. We can coach local sports teams, go to local theaters, or visit local bars, coffee shops or music venues.

**Duration.** Genuine change in a community takes a very long time to accomplish. For a church to graft itself into the life of a community, it can't be expected to happen in a few months or even a few years. It has to take place over many years or decades. Christ the King Church is committed to the slow, deliberate and long approach in our mission to Cincinnati. We are not parachute missionaries who share the gospel and then leave. We are committed for the long haul. By God's grace, may our legacy as a church outlive its members well into the future.

# We are Servants

*“Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.” –Matthew 20:25*

We were not created to live for ourselves, but for God who created us. God’s created design for people is to be servants. This is modeled in Scripture by Jesus himself. Although Jesus is God in human form, he “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus also modeled service for his disciples by washing their feet (John 13). He made himself lowly and gave his life away for the benefit of others. Jesus said that a disciple is not above his teacher. If Jesus was a servant, then we also are servants, “even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25).

The kingdom of God is proclaimed and displayed when we serve others and not ourselves. Our primary service to other people is to those in the church. But as we will see, the kingdom of God advances through us outside the church as well.

## *The Kingdom of God Through Edifying the Church*

God designed his church to be an interdependent community where he distributes skills and gifts to different people for the benefit of the whole community. The apostle Paul likens this to the human body. The human body works best when each body part does what it was designed to do.

This is how people serve in the body of Christ. Each person uses his or her individual gifts or talents to build others up. Nobody has all the gifts, so the body works best when each person is serving others with the gifts he or she has been given. Some people will be great at hospitality. Some gifted musically. Others are gifted at counseling and exhortation. Some people have great insight into the Bible. Others are gifted at building and construction. And still others are organizers, leader, or administrators. And so on.

Each of us has a choice to make with our gifts: we can withhold our gifts and not serve people with them, or we can use them to serve others. Whenever people aren’t serving, then the body of Christ is not as strong as it could be. We all need each other.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body... But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose... The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

The goal of all this inward serving is simple: *edification*. That means building each other up. We build each other up by meeting physical needs, helping each other with handy work, teaching each other, serving people who are sick or hurting, celebrating with those who have things to celebrate and mourning with those who are in pain. In fact, our lives should be so interdependent that we could say, “If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (vs 26).

There are many opportunities to serve that are not connected to any particular “spiritual gift.” For example, there is no particular gift of doing dishes, changing diapers, or taking out the trash, but these are ways that family members serve one another. The church is the same. There is no spiritual gift of working in children’s ministry or serving with the parking team or welcome team, yet these are all needs within the church.

### *The Kingdom of God Through Relieving Suffering*

Another facet of our serving is to work to relieve suffering in our church and in the world. Our longing for heaven does not mean that we should neglect the very real needs of people in this world.<sup>35</sup> This can take many different forms. Pastor Tim Keller says, “Our own deeds of mercy also point forward to the promise of the new heaven and the new earth, and they also show that the promise of the kingdom is already being fulfilled in the pouring out of the love of Christ through the Spirit.”<sup>36</sup>

The church should work to relieve human suffering as a sign that the kingdom of God is present among us. And doing this sort of ministry “melts hearts... removes objections...” and provides tangible evidence that our faith in Christ is genuine.<sup>37</sup> Jesus modeled this for us. Many of his miracles involved feeding the hungry (Luke 9, he feeds the 5000), relieving sickness and suffering (John 5, Jesus heals a paralyzed man), and even raising the dead (John 11, Jesus raises Lazarus). In Luke 10:9, Jesus directly ties the healing ministry to the in-breaking of his kingdom. He instructed his disciples to go and do ministry in town and “heal the sick in it and say to them, ‘the kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

When John the Baptist asked Jesus to confirm for him that he was the Messiah, Jesus showed him that he was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies of the kingdom in his ministry. Jesus said, “the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news (the gospel) preached to them” (Matthew 11:4-5). In Matthew 25, Jesus commands us to care for the hungry, naked, imprisoned, and foreigners. Here we see vivid displays of the works that Jesus associates with the coming of his kingdom.

Today, one way the church can bear witness to God’s kingdom at work in us is to care for those who are the least of society – the blind, the deaf, the diseased, and so on. We also can feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the imprisoned, and show hospitality to strangers (Matthew 25:31ff). James 5:14 says that the elders of the church should come and pray and care for the sick.

Each church congregation is free to determine the types of ministries they will commit to. Not every church can be involved in every cause. Some will start food pantries, some may have a hospitality house, and some may partner with poverty ministries. Some may welcome strangers by teaching ESL classes. Some will support crisis pregnancy centers. The possibilities are endless.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Kingdom of God Through Seeking Shalom*

In the Bible, there is a rich and powerful concept known as *shalom*. This is a Hebrew word. The concept is so broad and deep that no English word can satisfactorily carry its true meaning. *Shalom* is a condition of harmony, well-being, and health. The Bible translates it “peace,” but the meaning goes much deeper.

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<sup>35</sup> Bromiley, 72.

<sup>36</sup> Tim Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road*, 86.

<sup>37</sup> Keller, *Mercy*, 107.

<sup>38</sup> Corbett and Fikkert, 46. God gives “Christians some freedom in deciding the extent and manner in which the local church should do this, either directly or indirectly.”

When everything is in a proper relationship with God, people experience shalom. Shalom is what you will feel and experience when the kingdom of God is being worked out in your life, family, church, and community. Even to this day, Hebrews will greet one another by saying, “Shalom.”

God desires for his people to be ruled by his peace (shalom), righteousness and justice, and for this to be the enduring form of government for his people. God cares about government. God prefers peace instead of anarchy, righteousness instead of unrighteousness, and justice instead of injustice. In other words, it is right and good for Christians to involve themselves in civil systems, community councils, neighborhood organizations, school systems, and even politics (gasp!) to work to influence those systems in order to increase the overall shalom. Shalom is increased where Christians are working for peace, righteousness, and justice. Shalom is also increased where suffering is relieved (see above discussion).

This does not mean that, through human effort, we can usher in God’s kingdom ourselves.<sup>39</sup> God will take care of restoring everything when Jesus returns. But we may still work for the shalom of God in our lives right now.

Geoffrey Bromiley writes that “Christianity... posits a history that begins in creation, has its center in Jesus Christ, and reaches its goal in the kingdom of God.”<sup>40</sup> The kingdom of God is not contained in a political party, however, nor should Christians allow themselves to be used by political parties as a special interest group. We get screwed every time we go down this road. But that doesn’t mean we should run away from politics either. We work for shalom, but also recognize that we don’t “have a savior on capitol hill.”<sup>41</sup>

In conclusion, Christians can and should work to make earth reflect God’s kingdom in every way. That means that Christians should be involved in sharing the gospel of Christ so that people cease their hostility with God and become disciples. Christians should be working to see that people in their neighborhoods experience less suffering because the kingdom of God is at work in that neighborhood. And the church should also act as a prophetic witness to aid in bringing about justice, equity, righteousness, and peace in the civil realm.

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<sup>39</sup> Bromiley, 72.

<sup>40</sup> Bromiley, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Derek Webb song, “A Savior on Capitol Hill.”



# CHURCH LIFE

There are a few particulars about our life as a church that are important for you to know as a member.

## *Baptism*

There are two specific ordinances in the Bible that the church is to observe: baptism and Communion (also known as “Lord’s Supper” and “Eucharist”). These ordinances are significant because they provide tangible experiences of the gospel. All of our senses are engaged. These are pictures and remembrances of what Christ did for us. They are for us a cause for rejoicing and celebration, for reflection and prayer, and for confession and repentance.

First, we observe the ordinance of baptism. Baptism signifies that the individual has made a personal profession of faith and desires to be a follower of Christ. No individual who claims to be a Christian can refuse baptism. He or she is making their faith public.

Baptism also signifies that the church accepts the conversion testimony of that individual and is willing to receive that person into their church fellowship. Therefore, baptism is both *personal* and *corporate*. The emphasis given in the New Testament is not on the individual choosing to be baptized but rather the church obeying God and baptizing converts. Baptism belongs primarily to the church and secondarily to the individual who is being baptized. Christ the King Church also believes that full immersion in water is the mode of baptism most faithful to Scripture.

Some church traditions baptize infants, however, who are too young to make a personal faith commitment to Jesus Christ. We believe that the children of Christian parents are blessed to have these parents, but these children are too young to understand the gospel and make a faith commitment to Jesus. Therefore, Christ the King Church will not practice infant baptism, nor recognize infant baptism for prospective church members. For those who were baptized as infants, baptism by full immersion is required for any who desire to be members of Christ the King Church.

We realize this is a very personal and sensitive issue for many people. We have two position papers on baptism available upon request, and our pastors are available to discuss this further.

## *Communion*

The second ordinance of the church is Communion. This is the practice of remembering the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by eating the bread and drinking the cup.

The Lord’s Supper is a *remembrance* of what Jesus did. It pictures, literally “proclaims,” the gospel for us and engages our senses to help remind us of the fact that it is not our body that was broken and it is not our blood that was shed. Jesus died in our place.

At Christ the King Church, we will observe the Lord’s Supper as a memorial, since Jesus said to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). This is an aid to faith. Every time we take the Lord’s Supper, we remember the gospel. We observe Communion weekly.

Churches practice Communion using different methods, many of which are perfectly acceptable. Our practice is a method called “intinction.” The intinction method involves taking the communion bread, dipping it into the cup, and eating it.

## *Church Discipline*

An unusual benefit of church membership is the deep accountability provided by this sort of a covenant with other people. “Discipline” is derivative of the word “disciple.” The church’s job is to make disciples and use various means to help God’s people grow in their faith. Church discipline involves all the tools necessary for the spiritual formation of the church.

The phrase “church discipline” is also commonly used to denote the church’s right to remove from fellowship those members who are ensnared in unusually destructive sin patterns and refuse to repent despite multiple pleas from various constituencies within the church. This is a gravely serious matter, and the elders of Christ the King Church do not take this lightly.

In 1 Corinthians 5, the apostle Paul calls out the church for tolerating a man committing incest by having sex with his stepmother. The leaders of the Corinthian church committed two errors in this case. First, they failed to call the man to repentance and use their authority as elders to remove him from the church. Second, they failed to protect the church from the destructive influence of this man on the congregation.

Church discipline is not a trigger-happy pastor’s way of getting rid of unwanted people. Church discipline refers to the whole process of holding people accountable to Christ, even if the process ends in excommunication. But even if the church is forced to excommunicate someone, the goal is not punitive, but restorative. We are always seeking to lead people back to the cross in repentance and faith.

The elders of Christ the King Church reserve the right to remove from fellowship and/or membership any individual or group that has been determined to continue in unusually destructive and divisive sin patterns and refuses to repent after being warned repeatedly to do so.

## *Elders and Church Government*

Every church family needs some structure and leadership to function effectively. At CTK, our form of church government is called a “plurality of elders.” Our church constitution and by-laws are available upon request.

The office of elder (also known as “pastor,” “bishop,” or “overseer”) is the highest office that will be recognized by Christ the King Church. In the Bible, the elders are the leaders of the church. Deacons and church members are accountable to the elders, and the elders are accountable to God.

Different elders have different callings and gifts within the elder board. Therefore, it will be appropriate for one to serve as the “first among equals” on the elder board and provide direction and leadership to the board, while simultaneously submitting to the board as a whole. This man, who is the first among equals, will be called the “lead pastor.” Michael Clary is the lead pastor of Christ the King Church.

Since this is the highest office in the church, the Scriptures place a great emphasis on the character qualifications of elders (see the chart below for these qualifications).

*Qualifications for Elders according to 1 Timothy and Titus.<sup>42</sup>*

<b>1 Timothy</b>		<b>Titus</b>	
<b>3:2</b>	above reproach	<b>1:6, 7</b>	above reproach
<b>3:2</b>	husband of one wife	<b>1:6</b>	husband of one wife
<b>3:2</b>	sober-minded	<b>1:8</b>	disciplined
<b>3:2</b>	self-controlled	<b>1:8</b>	self-controlled
<b>3:2</b>	Respectable		—
<b>3:2</b>	Hospitable	<b>1:8</b>	hospitable
<b>3:2</b>	able to teach	<b>1:9</b>	able to give instruction
<b>3:3</b>	not a drunkard	<b>1:7</b>	not . . . a drunkard
<b>3:3</b>	not violent but gentle	<b>1:7</b>	not . . . violent
<b>3:3</b>	not quarrelsome	<b>1:7</b>	not be arrogant or quick-tempered
<b>3:3</b>	not a lover of money	<b>1:7</b>	not . . . greedy for gain
<b>3:4–5</b>	manage his own household well, care for God's church	<b>1:7</b>	God's steward
<b>3:4</b>	keeping his children submissive	<b>1:6</b>	children are believers (or “faithful”), not insubordinate
<b>3:6</b>	not a recent convert		—
<b>3:7</b>	well thought of by outsiders		—
	—	<b>1:8</b>	a lover of good; upright, holy

*Expectations of CTK Elders*

Based on the qualifications detailed above, here are a few things that you should expect from every elder of Christ the King Church.

First, he will be qualified. Any person who will ever be considered for eldership must meet the qualifications for eldership listed above. The Bible describes a certain kind of person; a person that you can respect, trust, follow and submit to. Each candidate for eldership at Christ the King Church will be thoroughly examined, tested, and observed over a long period of time. Our elder process documentation is available upon request.

Second, he will be a person who knows and can teach the Bible. Lots of people have good and exemplary character, but church elders must be theologically wired and able to explain things about God to other people from the Bible.

Third, he will be an example. The elders of Christ the King Church should be able to say to others with full confidence, “Follow my life.” Elders are living and breathing models of conduct and behavior for the church.

Fourth, he will be a shepherd. He will be charged with the task of protecting you and your family. He will do this by keeping watch over you, by guarding the gate of the church from deceivers and “wolves” (Matthew 7:15), and by helping you to apply the Bible to your life.

Finally, he will be a man. The Bible insists that men alone occupy the office of elder.

(Any man who desires to be considered for eldership must submit a written letter to the lead pastor.)

<sup>42</sup> Taken from the ESV Study Bible Notes.

## *Responsibilities of Church Members*

Here is where we need to get really practical and deal with what we are expecting from one another as a church.

First, we ask each church member to show up. We make gathering together in corporate worship and in smaller groups a top priority. Obviously, there are times when you just can't be there. That is understandable, but you should make it a high priority to be there every week.

Examples of bad reasons for missing corporate worship:

- "I went to a late movie on Saturday night and now I'm sleepy."
- "It's finals week at school and I need to study because I just wasted my whole weekend playing Xbox."
- "My child is sick and since my wife isn't coming I guess I'll stay home too."
- "The sermons/music/whatever haven't been very good lately."
- "So and so at church made me mad so I'm going to avoid them until I cool off a bit."
- "It's nice outside today. My friends and I are going to have 'church' at the riverfront."

Secondly, the leadership of Christ the King Church has a responsibility before God for your welfare and spiritual health. Pray for us. Be submissive to our leadership as long as doing so will not be in direct contradiction to Scripture. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you." Avoid endless complaints and give us the benefit of the doubt. More often than not, we make decisions based on information that you do not have and cannot have. Extend grace to us as you expect others to extend grace to you.

Thirdly, the Bible is stacked with teaching about how we are supposed to treat each other and get along (see Appendix Two, "One Another" Verses in the New Testament). These aren't just cute catch phrases. Hating your brother or sister is spiritual murder (Matthew 5:21ff), and murder is kind of a big deal at Christ the King Church. We are expected to give one another the benefit of the doubt, defend one another's honor, not gossip about each other, and so on.

In conjunction with the above, we also have a responsibility to help each other kill sin in our lives. Thus we are commanded in Scripture to be on the giving and receiving end of rebukes. We don't want to be spiritual masochists, always looking for new ways to beat up ourselves and others, but we do need to be willing to apply Scripture to each others' lives. It is going to happen, so be prepared for it and be grateful that God established his church in this way.

Fourthly, committing to Christ the King Church means that you understand our corporate responsibility to perform corrective church discipline when necessary. This is probably one of the most controversial and unpleasant things we have committed ourselves to as a church. But this is mandated in Scripture. Rest assured, we are not eagerly waiting to show off our commitment to church discipline by kicking out somebody for smoking a cigarette. Removal of a member for unrepentant sin will be a last resort measure after every other attempt to restore him or her has been satisfied.

Fifthly, Christ the King Church cannot operate for free. We will survive as a church only if its members take upon themselves the responsibility to give generously, joyfully, and sacrificially.

Finally, Christ the King Church is going to be engaged in a spiritual battle, and we are all foot soldiers. We are marching on enemy territory armed with the Word of God and announcing the King and his kingdom. John Calvin said that "It is one of the characteristics of the divine word, that whenever it

appears, Satan ceases to slumber and sleep."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, we should expect a fair amount of spiritual warfare in our church. God is our protector, and we fight with prayer. We need to commit ourselves to the discipline of prayer.

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<sup>43</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

## NEW MEMBER COVENANT

As a follower of Jesus Christ as my Savior and my Lord, and having been subsequently baptized into the church, I commit myself to his service through the local body of Christ the King Church.

### Commitments

I hereby commit my life to Jesus Christ, my Lord and King, and to his kingdom, and to fulfilling his kingdom directives through his local church in Cincinnati, Christ the King Church.

I hereby commit to follow the elders of Christ the King Church. I will trust their leadership as they submit to Christ, and I will bear with their failings. I recognize that they are assuming responsibility for me before God as shepherds of his flock. I further recognize that their authority is derived from Holy Scripture, and they are accountable before God to faithfully proclaim the Scriptures and to guard and protect the faith.

I hereby commit to intercede on behalf of Christ the King Church, and her leaders, and her members, and her mission.

I hereby commit to devote my time to Christ the King Church. I will faithfully worship with the body of Christ corporately and faithfully serve the body and my community through my City Group.

I hereby commit to the Lord a consistent portion of my income to Christ the King Church. I will give generously and cheerfully.

I hereby commit to strive for unity in the body of Christ. I will guard against disunity, strife, slander, and gossip. I will believe the best in others and forgive when wronged. I will love my brothers and sisters as well as my enemies, for this is what Christ instructed us to do. I further recognize that conflict in the church is inevitable, but Christ cancels former divisions and surpasses former unities.

## APPENDIX ONE

### “One Another” Verses in the New Testament

**Ephesians 4:1ff** – I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Colossians 3:12ff** – Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Romans 12:10** – Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

**Romans 12:16** – Live in harmony with one another.

**Romans 14:13** – Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.

**Romans 15:5** – May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus.

**Romans 15:7** – Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

**Galatians 5:13** – For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

**Galatians 5:15** – But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

**Galatians 6:2** – Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

**Ephesians 4:25-32** – Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

**Ephesians 5:18** – And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**Colossians 3:9** – Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices...

**1 Thessalonians 3:12** – And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you.

**James 4:11** – Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

**James 5:9** – Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

**James 5:16** – Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

**1 Peter 1:22** – Love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

**1 Peter 4:8** – Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

**1 John 3:11** – For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

**1 John 4:7** – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

**1 John 4:11** – Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**1 John 4:12** – No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15** – See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.



## APPENDIX TWO

### Our Affiliations

Since the church is all about Christian relationships, then it stands to reason that entire churches will have formal relationships with other congregations. This is healthy and provides an extra layer of accountability and resourcing for a newer congregation.

Christ the King Church has several strong partnerships with organizations that share our desire to make disciples.

The **Cincinnati Area Baptist Association** is committed with us to plant churches in the greater Cincinnati area. The **Fellowship of Evangelical Churches** is another organization that we work with to plant churches. Internationally, we partner with **Vision Nationals** to plant more gospel centered churches in India. We are affiliated with the **Acts 29 Network**, a church planting network. Acts 29 has some Baptist churches, some Presbyterian churches, and independent churches.

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