FAITH
FOUNDATIONS

FALL 2025

FAITH BAPTIST HISTORICAL MARKERS

Faith Baptist had its beginning with a commitment made by members of Central Baptist Church and the Dakota Baptist Conference to meet the goal of "Double in a Decade" by starting a new a Baptist Church in the southwestern part of Sioux Falls.

JANUARY 18, 1979 - Under the stewardship of the Dakota Baptist Conference, Executive Minister, Rev. Donald Reed, and interested people begin meeting weekly for Bible Study.

MAY 13, 1979 - The first worship service is held in the gymnasium of the South Sioux School with eighty-eight people in attendance.

AUGUST 17, 1979 - Faith Baptist Fellowship is officially recognized as a Baptist General Conference Church by the Dakota Baptist Conference delegates beginning with 83 charter members. Later in the Fall, Don Reed is called as the first full-time pastor.

1980 - 1981 - The church purchases property in South Sioux Falls (now 57th & Minnesota). The first services are held on the property on March 1, 1981.

1983 - 1986 - The church continues to grow. A Building and Site Committee is established to develop a master plan for new facilities, which will include a Worship Center, office space, and a multi-purpose facility. Ground is broken in April of 1986, and they are ready for use in November.

1989 - Pastor Don Reed accepts a call to pastor a church in California. Later in the year, Dan Carlson accepts the call to become the second senior pastor of Faith Baptist Fellowship.

1992 - A year is taken to refocus the mission and vision of Faith Baptist. The church continues to experience growth. Several new missionaires are commissioned and sent out, some of whom are still supported by Faith Baptist today.

1996 - Faith Baptist celebrates its tenth year of ministry.

1997 - Because of God's blessing, Faith Baptist is able to pay off all it's debt on the church building.

1998 - 2002 - Plans begin to expand the facilities with new education facilities and office space to be added. A major roof leak in 2001 accelerates the need and prompts the congregation to give generously. This allows for construction to begin on July 18th, 2001 with the new facilities being completed in November of 2002.

2003 - David Vilhauer is hired as the Associate Pastor of Christian Education and Assimilation.

2004 - Faith Baptist celebrates its twenty-fifth year of ministry.

2008 - Pastor Dan Carlson steps down as Senior Pastor to become the District Executive Minister in Minnesota.

2008 - David Phelps is brought in as interim pastor. During this time Faith Baptist establishes a plurality of elders and forms the Elder Council.

2009 - Dana Olson accepts the call to become the third senior pastor of Faith Baptist Fellowship.

2010 - The church refocuses and clarifies its mission, vision, and ministry philosophy, establishing its Five Loves & Five Commitments. The theological direction of the church is also further clarified.

2012 - The church pays off the mortgage for the education and office space built in 2002! Jayson Wittrup accepts the call to be the Associate Pastor of Worship & First Steps.

2015 - Angela Myers begins serving as Children's Ministry Director.

2016 - Shepherd Leader Training is launched to train and equip men within the church and help prepare possible future elders.

2017 - 2018 - With the church experiencing significant growth, much time is spent in prayer and discussion to discern the next steps. This leads to a vision to see a second campus planted on the west side of Sioux Falls. The Stepping Forward campaign is launched for the purpose of establishing the West Campus and carrying out improvements to the facilities and property at the South Campus.

SEPTEMBER 9, 2018 - Faith Baptist West is launched under the motto of "One church in two locations." Jayson Wittrup becomes the campus pastor.

2019 - Faith Baptist celebrates forty years of ministry. Thomas Slawson accepts the call to be the Associate Pastor of Worship & First Steps at the South Campus.

2020 - 2021 - Despite the many challenges of the COVID pandemic, the Lord continues to bless both the South and West campuses with growth both in numbers and spritual maturity. The West Campus expands its facilities to accomodate its larger attendance and to allow for Sunday School and Christian Education classes. Signficant capital improvements are made at the South Campus.

2021 - Sensing the Lord's direction for the West Campus to eventually become an autonomous church, and recognizing the reality of upcoming pastoral transitions at the South Campus, Anticipating Change, a year of focused prayer, is launched to seek the Lord's guidance for the days ahead.

2022 - Jimmy Hoang accepts the call to be the Associate Pastor of Discipleship at the West Campus.

2023 - Faith Baptist West adopts the name "Risen Hope Baptist" on Easter Sunday, April 9th as they prepare to lauch as a fully autonomous church in 2024. Faith Baptist Fellowship (South) calls Mike Johnson as the fourth lead pastor.

JANUARY 1, 2024 - Risen Hope Baptist becomes a fully autonomous sister church of Faith Baptist.

AUGUST, 2024 - Elder Mark Hecht is called to be the Pastor of Discipleship.

WELCOME!

Thank you for being part of Faith Foundations. We hope the material presented in this class over the next thirteen weeks will leave you feeling like you have a solid grasp of what we're all about at Faith. Whether you've been a member at Faith for many years, are interested in becoming a member, or are just wanting to know more about our church, we hope this class will be edifying for you and will help you grow in your love for the Lord and in your relationship with him.

We want this class will be an engaging experience for everyone. Throughout our time together there will be planned breakout discussions. We encourage you to join in with these times to share your thoughts and ask questions.

Our pastors and elders are here to serve you in any way we can, so if there's something you would like to discuss further, please let one of us know and we'll be happy to setup a time with you.

Pressing on & Reaching Forward
The Elders of Faith Baptist Fellowship

FAITH FOUNDATIONS

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JOHN
LIGHT SHINING IN DARKNESS
BREAD of LIFE
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The GOOD SHEPHERD
LIGHT of the WORLD

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCTION

Gospel Doctrine and Gospel Culture

"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."
Titus 2:1

"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."
Ephesians 4:1-3

THE "LITTLE GREEN BOOK"

For many years now Faith Baptist has given out the "little green book" to visitors entitled ***The Gospel,*** by Ray Ortlund. Have you read it? We would certainly encourage everyone to read this book if they haven't already. Over the years hundreds of copies of this book have been given away. **Why do you think we give out this book?**

Perhaps we can answer this question a little better when we know the full title of the book: ***The Gospel: How the Church Portrays the Beauty of Christ.*** While Ortlund's book certainly proclaims the gospel message to people individually, it mainly focuses on how the gospel forms and shapes the life of a local church. At Faith we want everyone to know and believe the gospel personally for salvation, but we also want it to define everything about us corporately.

A TALE OF TWO CHURCHES

Imagine you've just moved to a new town. It's your first week and you're planning to visit a new church. You've done your due diligence ahead of time by going online and checking out some church websites and maybe listening to some sermons. There are two churches that catch your interest: **The First Baptist Church of Sound Doctrine**, and **The First Baptist Church of Just Love Everyone**.

In the coming weeks you spend some time visiting these two churches. The FBC Sound Doctrine seems to check all the right doctrinal boxes, but is missing something. There doesn't seem to be much fellowship. You've been visiting for several weeks, and hardly anyone has spoken to you. The sermons seem more like seminary-level theology classes with nothing much in the way of practical application. You come away with an uneasy feeling that they *know* a lot, but they don't *do* a lot.

FBC Just Love Everyone, however, concerns you also. People have been super warm, friendly and hospitable, but you can't seem to get anyone to tell you what they believe. The sermons seem to be more like motivational talks with the Bible being quoted only occasionally. Are these the only two options you have?

2 JUST A LITTLE MATH

In both of the previous examples, something doesn't add up. One church claims to believe what is true, but it doesn't seem to be affecting how they live. The other seems to live in a vibrant way outwardly, but it's not rooted and grounded in truth, and therefore it comes across as hollow and insincere.

Thankfully, we're not stuck picking between these two options only. The Bible presents us with a vision for Christ's church where local fellowships of believers ***believe*** and hold fast to what is true (Titus 2:1), and ***live*** in a way that reflects that truth (Eph. 4:1-3). In Ortlund's book this is called **"gospel doctrine"** and **"gospel culture."** He states it in his book this way, *"Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace"* (pg. 21). He then represents this in the form of a math equation:

Gospel Doctrine + Gospel Culture = POWER!

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *How does gospel doctrine create gospel culture?*
- *What happens when we strive for one without the other?*

One of the things we strive for at Faith is to be a church of both gospel doctrine and gospel culture. We're always growing, and God is always at work shaping and refining us, but this is what we are prayerfully seeking. Ortland points out the importance of this:

> *"Every one of us is wired to lean one way or the other—toward emphasizing doctrine or culture. Some of us naturally resonate with truth and standards and definitions. Others of us resonate with feel and vibe and relationships. Whole churches, too, can emphasize one or the other. Left to ourselves, we will get it partly wrong, but we won't feel wrong, because we'll be partly right. But only partly. Truth without grace is harsh and ugly. Grace without truth is sentimental and cowardly. The living Christ is full of* ***grace and truth*** *(John 1:14). We cannot represent him, therefore, within the limits of our own personalities and backgrounds. Yet as we depend on him moment by moment, both personally and corporately, he will give us wisdom. He will stretch us and make our churches more like himself." - Ortlund, pgs. 22-23*

PUTTING THIS INTO ACTION

How do we pursue this at Faith Baptist Fellowship? What guides us as we seek to be a church that reflects Christ himself–full of truth and grace? For many years now Faith has been guided by two important statements that help us maintain focus in our calling as a church. These are our **Mission Statement** and our **Vision Statement**. Both of these brief statements help us remain focused on *what* we're called to do and *who* we are called to be.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

What we are called to **do**

To honor God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ and equipping them for growth and service.

See: Matthew 28:18-20, Ephesians 4:11-13

Two things you might notice about our mission statement is that it's simple and biblical. We're not seeking to do something new. God has called his church to fulfill the Great Commission and *"make disciples of all nations"* (Matt. 28:19). Therefore, an indispensable part of our mission is **making disciples.** At Faith our aim is not merely people who sign a card, raise their hand, or pray a prayer in response to an invitation to follow Christ. This may be a starting point for someone on a life-long journey with Christ. Rather, our ultimate aim is that those who profess Christ would grow to be **all-in, sold-out, fully-committed followers (disciples) of Jesus who love him, obey him, and are seeking by the power of his Spirit to be like him.** As they grow spiritually, we want to see these disciples making more disciples. This is how Christ's church is spreading around the world today!

OUR VISION STATEMENT

What we desire to **be**

To be a vibrant, healthy family of Christ-like believers proclaiming a cross-centered gospel, living cross-centered lives.

See: Romans 8:28-29, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Luke 9:23

Our mission statement keeps us focused on what we are called to *do*. Our vision statement is who we are striving by God's grace to *be*. As we've discussed the importance of being a church characterized by gospel doctrine and gospel culture, hopefully you now see this reflected in our vision statement:

- **Gospel Doctrine - Proclaiming a cross-centered gospel**
- **Gospel Culture - Living cross-centered lives**

When we use the expression "cross-centered" we are saying that our desire is to keep the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ central. It is central to what we proclaim, (our doctrine), and it is central to how we live, (our culture). As believers who have been adopted into God's family through Jesus Christ, we want to be a church that continually proclaims the gospel that has saved us and continually lives in a way that reflects our love for Christ and for one another. As the church does this, the result is a powerful witness for Christ in the darkness of this world! Ortlund states,

> ***"When the doctrine is clear and the culture is beautiful, that church will be powerful. But there are no shortcuts to getting there. Without the doctrine, the culture will be weak. Without the culture, the doctrine will seem pointless." Ortlund, pg. 21***

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Why are our mission and vision statements important?*
- *How have you seen this these statements in action at Faith?*

CONCLUSION

This concept of Gospel Doctrine + Gospel Culture = Power frames our philosophy of ministry at Faith Baptist Fellowship. As you may have noticed already in the table of contents, Faith Foundations is structured around this idea. Over the coming weeks we will dive further into what we believe and teach (our doctrine) and then look at how we live in light of that (our culture). We hope this will be both an encouraging time that will also challenge you to grow!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?
- What questions did this lesson prompt?
- In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?
- In what ways are you serving (or would you like to serve) at Faith as we carry out our mission and pursue our vision?

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- Memorize the Mission & Vision Statements.
- If you're not yet serving or plugged in at Faith, mark a few ways you'd be willing to serve on your Faith Card during the service.
- If you're not a member at Faith, prayerfully consider if the Lord might be leading you to join.
- If you've never read *The Gospel* by Ray Ortlund, start reading it this week!

WEEK 1 NOTES

in
LIFE

WEEK 2 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

What is The Gospel?

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

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

As we said in Week 1, our vision at Faith is to be *"...a vibrant, healthy family of Christ-like believers proclaiming a **cross-centered gospel**, living **cross-centered lives**."* This is reflected in the little math equation...

Gospel Doctrine + Gospel Culture = POWER!

If we're seeking by God's grace to be a church of **gospel doctrine** and **gospel culture**, then it's important that we define what we mean by "the gospel."

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

The word "gospel" comes to us from the Greek word ***euangelion***, which means "good news." So, we could we simply say "The gospel is good news!" However, without further context or clarification this will raise other questions such as, *"What is this good news about?"* or *"What makes this news so good?"* If we clarify that this "good news" is about Jesus Christ and we consider all the aspects of who he is and what he has done, we may find that coming up with a short, concise answer is more challenging than we think!

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *How would you define "the gospel"?*
- *How might you explain it to a non-Christian?*

WHERE DO WE FIND IT IN SCRIPTURE?

As we think through how we define the gospel, we realize that a full definition of it comes from not just one verse or Scripture passage, but from many that encompass the truth of who Jesus is and what he did. Paul's epistle to the Romans gives one of the clearest and most comprehensive expressions of the gospel message in one book. The Apostle Paul begins by telling us that he is, ***"... not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*** (Rom. 16:1). In the chapters that follow he then expounds upon the gospel. Let's take a moment to look at a few of these key Scriptures and ask, "What does this teach me about the gospel?"

- **Romans 1:18-20 -** _____
- **Romans 3:23 -** _____
- **Romans 3:24-25 -** _____
- **Romans 6:9-10 -** _____
- **Romans 3:28 -** _____
- **Romans 8:1 -** _____

THE GOSPEL: A SUMMARY STATEMENT

There are various ways we could summarize the truths of the gospel into one statement. But for the purposes of this class we will use the following:

The Eternal God, who is perfect, righteous, holy, and just, created us for his own glory, and we are accountable to him to perfectly keep all of his commandments and love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

See: Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 18:30, Deuteronomy 32:4, Isaiah 6:3, Isaiah 43:7, Romans 14:12, Matthew 12:36-37

We have all sinned against God, broken his commandments, and we continuously fall short of his glory. We have all rebelled against him and rejected his authority over us. Because of this, we justly deserve death and eternal judgement.

See: Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 6:23

God being gracious and merciful, has provided the Way for sinners like us to be reconciled to himself. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ (God in the flesh) to save fallen sinners. Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross, taking the punishment for sinners. On the third day he rose from the grave, defeating sin, and death, and hell for all who believe. He ascended to Heaven where he is now seated at God the Father's right hand.

See: Ephesians 2:4-5, Titus 3:4-5, John 3:16, 1 Timothy 1:15, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 Peter 2:22, Isaiah 53:5, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Ephesians 1:20-21, Hebrews 1:3

All who come to Jesus Christ by faith alone, repenting of their sins and believing in his perfect sacrifice, trusting him and no one else for salvation, are justified before God, adopted into his family, and are no longer under judgment for their sins. Jesus has promised to return one day and reign forever in the fullness of his kingdom with all those who have believed in Him.

See: Acts 16:31, Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 3:19, Romans 3:24, Galatians 4:4-7, Romans 8:1, John 5:24, Revelation 22:20, Revelation 11:15

The gospel is a rich and wonderful truth, so rich that it's difficult to condense it into one brief statement. But this summary statement seeks to highlight the essential components of the gospel. Here at Faith you will notice that as we preach, teach, study Scripture together, and seek to live our lives according to God's Word, we will highlight different aspects of this gospel message. But, when we speak of the "The Gospel," we're referring to the totality of this message–who God is and what he's done for us in Christ Jesus.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Is it essential to believe the gospel to be a Christian?*
- *Is there anything in this statement you disagree with?*

THE ESSENTIALS

As we look at the message of the gospel, we can see four main essential components. Identifying these can be helpful in understanding the logical flow of the gospel and sharing it with others.

GOD • MANKIND • CHRIST • FAITH

We call these components the "essentials" not because other doctrines are unimportant, but because believing these is essential to having a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. This glorious truth of the gospel is what has united Christians from around the world for centuries.

> *"If you believe what you like in the gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself." -Augustine of Hippo (354-430)*

> *"Trust wholly in Christ; rely altogether on his sufferings; beware of seeking to be justified in any other way than by his righteousness." -John Wycliffe (c. 1320s-1384)*

> *"Christ is the only door to salvation. He is the only grace, the only justifier, and the only mediator between God and man." -Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)*

> *"The gospel is the doctrine of Christ, and the truth of Christ is the only rule of all doctrine."- John Calvin (1509-1564)*

> *"The gospel of Jesus Christ is a scheme for bringing sinful, miserable men to a blessed, eternal state."- Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)*

> *"The man who does not glory in the gospel can surely know little of the plague of sin that is within him." - J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)*

> *"When we preach Christ crucified, we have no reason to stammer, or stutter, or hesitate, or apologize; there is nothing in the gospel of which we have any cause to be ashamed."- Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)*

> *"The gospel is not 'God loves us,' but 'God loves us at the cost of his Son." - Derek Thomas (1953-)*

10 CONCLUSION

At Faith you will hear us talk about the gospel constantly. Be assured that it is not merely a "buzz-word" that we are tossing around carelessly. It is the precious truth that God has reconciled lost, rebel sinners like us to himself through the precious blood of his Son Jesus Christ. It is our **doctrine**–the glorioius news that we believe and preach with the prayerful hope that others will be saved and know the joy of everlasting life in Christ forever. And it is our **culture**–the reason for why we live seek to live differently before God, with one another, and with our neighbors near and far. We hope hope and pray that you personally believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you're uncertain about this, please don't hesitate to talk with us!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?
- What questions did this lesson prompt?
- In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?
- Do you personally believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ? If you are uncertain, please setup a time to talk with one of our pastors, elders, or another faithful Christian!
- How does believing this message affect the way you live both personally and in your relationships with other believers?
- How can you share this message with others more?

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- Using the summary statement of the gospel, and the components of "God, Man, Christ, Faith," write an outline you can use to share the gospel with someone. Feel free to add in additional Scripture and your own personal testimony.
- Share the gospel with someone this week using this outline, or pick up the gospel tract *"What is the Gospel?"* by Greg Gilbert and share this with someone.

WEEK 2 NOTES

23 But he continued, "You are from below;
I am from above. You are of this world; I am
not of this world. **24** I told you that you would
die in your sins; if you do not believe that I
am *he*, you will indeed die in your sins."
25 "Who are you?" they asked.
"Just what I have been telling you from the
beginning," Jesus replied. **26** "I have much to
say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is
trustworthy, and what I have heard from him
I tell the world."
27 They did not understand that he was
telling them about his father. **28** So Jesus said,
"When you have lifted up[f] the Son of Man,
then you will know that I am he and that I do
nothing on my own but speak just what the
Father has taught me. **29** The one who sent
me is with me; he has not left me alone, for
I always do what pleases him."
30 Even as he
spoke, many believed in him.

Dispute Over Whose Children Jesus' Opponents Are

31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus
said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are
really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the
truth, and the truth will set you free."
33 They answered him, "We are Abraham's
descendants and have never been slaves of
anyone. How can you say that we shall be set
free?"
34 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, ev-
eryone who sins is a slave to sin. **35** Now a
slave has no permanent place in the fami-
ly, but a son belongs to it forever. **36** So if the
Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. **37** I
know that you are Abraham's descendants.
Yet you are looking for a way to kill me, be-
cause you have no room for my word. **38** I am
telling you what I have seen in the Father's
presence, and you are doing what you have
heard from your father."
39 "Abraham is our father," they answered.
"If you were Abraham's children," said
Jesus, "then you would do what Abraham
did. **40** As it is, you are looking for a way to kill
me, a man who has told you the truth that I
heard from God. Abraham did not do such
things. **41** You are doing the works of your
own father."
"We are not illegitimate children," they

[f] 28 The Greek for *lifted up* also means *exalted*.

[g] 36 Or *presence*. *Therefore* do what you have heard from the
Father. [h] 39 Some early manuscripts *If you are Abraham's children*, "said Jesus. "Then

Jesus' Claims About Himself

42 The Jews answered him, "Isn't we right
in saying that you are a Samaritan and be-
sides possessed?"
43 "I am not possessed by a demon," said
Jesus. "But I honor my Father and you dis-
honor me. **44** I am not seeking glory for my-
self; but there is one who seeks it, and he is
the judge. **45** Very truly I tell you, whoever
obeys my word will never see death."
46 At this they exclaimed, "Now we know
that you are demon-possessed! Abraham
died, and so did the prophets, yet you say that
whoever obeys your word will never taste
death. **53** Are you greater than our father
Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets.
Who do you think you are?"
54 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my
glory means nothing. My Father, whom
you claim as your God, is the one who gla-
rifies me. **55** Though you do not know him,
I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a
liar like you, but I do know him and obey his
word. **56** Your father Abraham rejoiced at the
thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was
glad."
57 "You are not yet fifty years old," they said
to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"
58 "Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered,
"before Abraham was born, I am!" **59** At this
they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus

WEEK 3 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

Our Affirmation of Faith

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."
Hebrews 10:23

"If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing."
1 Timothy 6:3-4a

"But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine."
Titus 2:1

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

In Week 2 we defined "the gospel." This is the essential message one must believe to be a true Christian. It's what unites us as believers, gives us hope, and is the foundation for all that we preach and do. But where does the rest of Scripture fit in? How does the essential message of the gospel relate to other important doctrines that we believe and teach? What else constitutes our **gospel doctrine** at Faith Baptist Fellowship? We hope to answer these questions in our lesson today.

WHAT IS OUR GOSPEL DOCTRINE?

In our world today it is relatively easy to find out what a church believes. Most churches have websites where you can listen to sermons, read about their beliefs, check out ministries, etc. In fact, it should probably concern you if a church does NOT publish this kind of information! At Faith we strive to be very transparent and clear with what we believe. Our beliefs, distinctives, doctrines, and practices are all published on our website at FaithSF.com. They've also been included in the Appendix of this Faith Foundations booklet beginning on page 92.

The word doctrine simply means "teaching." If we desire to be a people who live out a gospel culture together, then it is essential that we share a common doctrine, one that holds to the truth of Scripture. Our doctrine is the basis for all that we preach and teach at Faith. We'll be doing an overview of our Affirmation of Faith in today's session. This statement is part of our church bylaws and is agreed upon by all members of Faith Baptist Fellowship.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Why is it important that a church have a confession of faith?*
- *What doctrines do you think should be included?*

14 CREEDS & CONFESSIONS & CATECHISIMS, O MY!

Have you ever heard someone say, "I don't get into all of that theology stuff, I just believe the Bible!"? While it's commendable that the person wants to be committed to God's word, such reductionist statements aren't always helpful. All true Christians will tell you they believe the Bible, but it's obvious not all Christians agree on what the Bible says. Rarely would someone say that they "...just believe the Bible," but not have any other opinions on other important doctrines found in Scripture.

Throughout most of church history, Christians have summarized the teachings of the Bible in briefer statements of faith called ***creeds***, longer statements called ***confessions***, and statements arranged in the form of questions and answers suitable for teaching called ***catechisims***. While these are never to be confused with Scripture itself, they are very useful in summarizing many biblical doctrines in a succinct way. Some historic examples are given below:

Historic Creeds

- **Apostles Creed** - Roots as far back as the 2nd century. Final form ca. 700s AD. A basic statement of belief confessed by Christians for centuries.
- **Nicene Creed** - Written at the first Council of Nicea in 325 AD to combat heresies about the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Athanasian Creed** - Written ca. 500s AD. A longer creed with an explicit emphasis on the Trinity and Christology.

Historic Confessions

- **Augsburg Confession** - Lutheran (1530)
- **Westminster Confession** - Presbyterian (1646)
- **Second London Confession** - Baptist (1689)

Historic Catechisms

- **Heidelberg Catechism** - Reformed (1563)
- **Westminster Shorter Catechism** - Presbyterian (1647)
- **Keach's Catechism** - Baptist (1689/1693)

It's clear that throughout most of the history of the church, Christians (including Baptists) have summarized what they believed about the Bible in concise ways for the purpose of ***clarity*** and ***unity***. In fact, most Christians confess a form of creed every time they gather for worship even if they don't realize it! The very songs that we sing together are often summary statements of Bible truths (i.e. creeds) that are sung corporately. Here's just one example:

> *"Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father; There is no shadow of turning with thee.*
> *Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not; As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be."*
> *-Thomas O. Chisholm (1923)*

OUR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

As part of a movement of churches known as Converge (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference), Our church has adopted as our affirmation of faith the statement of beliefs adhered to by all Converge churches. While we would consider most of the doctrines below as essential to the Christian faith, some are specific to Baptist beliefs. We would consider these important, biblical doctrines, but secondary to the core message of the gospel. Like all creeds, confessions, or catechisms that have come before, this statement is *not* itself Scripture, but we believe it to be a faithful summary of Scriptural truths.

I. THE WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (John 17:7; Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21)

II. THE TRINITY

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption. (Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-4; I John 5:7)

III. GOD THE FATHER

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of all people, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. (John 3:16-17; John 4:24; John 17:5)

IV. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. (Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:2-3; I John 1:7)

V. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide. (John 14:26; John 16:7-15; Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:13-14)

VI. HUMANITY

We believe God created humankind immutably as male and female to reflect and bear His image. As such, human beings of every ethnicity, age, ability, as well as the pre-born deserve dignity, protection, honor, respect, and Christian love. Because of Adam and Eve's free choice to sin, God's image in all humankind has become distorted and relationship with God has become disrupted. (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:16-19)

VII. REGENERATION

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. (John 1:12-13; John 3:3, 16-17; Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 3:5)

VIII. THE CHURCH

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world. (Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 2:38-41; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 5:25-27)

IX. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

We believe that Christians should live for the glory of God and the well-being of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. (II Corinthians 9:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:17-23; I Thessalonians 5:17-18)

X. THE ORDINANCES

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42; Romans 6:3-5; I Corinthians 11:23-32)

XI. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by any ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore Church and State must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other. (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:21)

XII. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

We believe that Christian marriage is a sacred institution ordained by God for the well-being and propagation of humankind. It is a covenant representing the spiritual and physical union into which one man and one woman may enter for the glory of God, symbolizing the relationship of Christ to his church. As the sign of this covenant, sexual activity is reserved exclusively for the marriage relationship. According to the scriptural ideal, marriage requires sacrificial love and faithfulness to each other for life. (Genesis 1:28, 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5; Ephesians 5:32-33)

XIII. CHURCH COOPERATION

We believe that local Churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in an association of churches. Such an organization, whether it is Converge Worldwide (formerly known as the Baptist General Conference) or one of its regional districts, exists and functions by the will of the Churches. Cooperation in the association is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis. (Acts 11:29-30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4; 3 John 5-8; Colossians 4:15-16)

XIV. LAST THINGS

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked. (John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:1-15; Matthew 25:31-46)

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Do you agree with our statement of faith?*
- *How might it foster a gospel culture at our church?*

18 THEOLOGICAL IDENTITY

As we've looked at our Affirmation of Faith we can summarize what we believe at Faith Baptist Fellowship in three ways:

1. **Theologically Conservative** - This doesn't mean we never do anything new. Rather it means, we *conserve* (hold to) *"...the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 1:3). In our confession we seek to be rooted and grounded in Scripture.
2. **Evangelical** - We believe that the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is essential for salvation. We are called to share that message to every nation that sinners would repent of their sins and trust in Christ.
3. **Baptist** - While we enjoy fellowship with all true believers regardless of their church affiliation, as Baptists we hold to a number of doctrines and practices that distinguish us from other denominations. We believe these doctrines and practices (while secondary) are still biblical and important.

CONCLUSION

As we seek by God's grace to be a church of **gospel doctrine** and **gospel culture** it is important that we are in agreement on these important matters. Therefore, while we welcome all to attend Faith Baptist who desire to learn and grow spiritually, all members must agree with our Affirmation of Faith. If you're considering membership at Faith we encourage you to read through the statement carefully and talk to us about any questions you may have.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

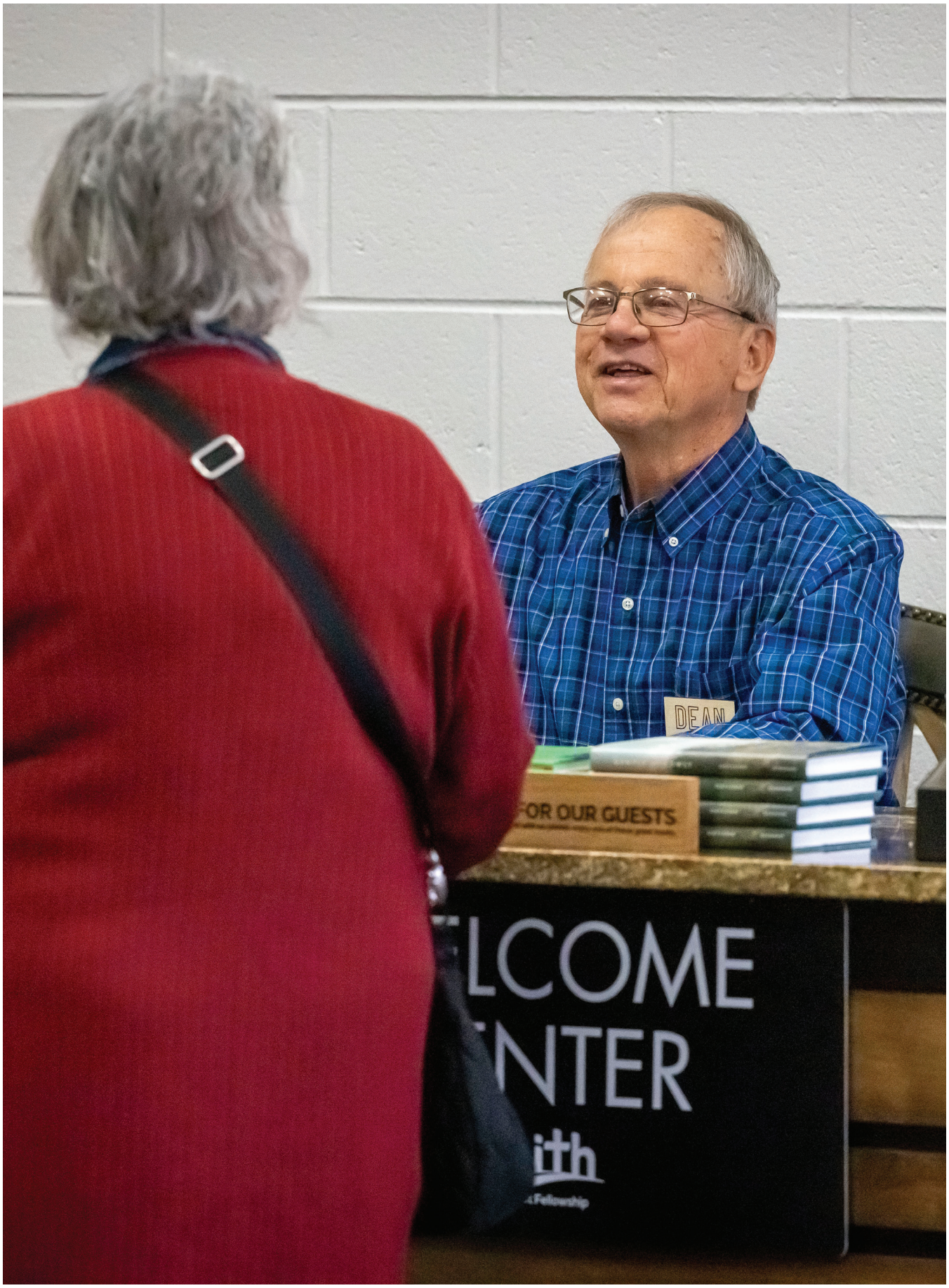
Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **Do you see value to summary statements of Biblical truths (e.g. creeds, confessions, and catechisms)? If so, in what ways? If not, why?**
- **How does having an agreed upon affirmation of faith help our church to remain grounded in gospel doctrine and culture?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Read through our Affirmation of Faith carefully and look up the Scripture references. Note any questions you might have.**
- **Search for some of the historic confessions of faith mentioned in this week's lesson and read through them. Note anything that might be confusing or that you might disagree with.**

WEEK 3 NOTES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WEEK 4 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

Doctrinal Distinctives

"[An overseer] must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it."
Titus 1:9

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

As we saw in Week 3, having a common doctrine is important for both ***clarity*** and ***unity*** in the local church. All members at Faith Baptist adhere to our Affirmation of Faith. But, there are other churches in Converge that also hold to this same statement. Are these churches simply carbon copies of Faith Baptist Fellowship? How can churches have the same statement of faith yet do things differently from one another?

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "DISTINCTIVES"

An important belief among Baptists is that each local church is autonomous. This was seen last week in our Affirmation of Faith, section XIII "Church Cooperation" on pg. 17. So, while we unite around a common confession of faith and volunarily cooperate with other churches for the puroses of mutual encouragement, church planting, missions, etc., there are certain positions we hold on matters of secondary and tertiary importance that may differ from other churches within our association. These positions are called our ***distinctives***. We hold to these distinctives not because of tradition or preference, but because we believe the Bible teaches them.

A PREFACE: THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE

Before we discuss our distinctives, it's important to comment on how they fit into everything we've discussed so far. To do this, we need to talk about doing ***"theological triage."*** If you've ever worked in the medical field, then you're probably familiar with this word *triage*. It's the process of prioritizing patients based on the urgency of their needs. For example, if you go to the Emergency Room with chest pains, you'll immediately take priority over someone with a sprained ankle. Both are important and need medical attention, but the first takes precedent because it is a potenially deadly emergency.

In a similar way, while all doctrines in Scripture are important, there are some that are critical to understanding the gospel and a person's salvation, and some that are not. Therefore it is helpful to think through how we prioritize various doctrines of Scripture. Doing so will help us determine how we best fellowship and cooperate with other Christians, even when we may hold differing views on some matters of doctrine. Theological triage can be broken down into four main categories:

THEOLOGICAL TRIAGE

URGENCY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
DIE FOR	Doctrines that are essential to the gospel. Doctrines one must affirm to be a Christian.	The Trinity, justification by faith alone, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnation, etc.
DIVIDE	Doctrines that are urgent for the health and practice of the local church. These don't affect the gospel but are important to determining the type of church go you to.	Baptism (recipients & mode), women's roles in ministry, church government, etc.
DISCUSS	Doctrines that are important but shouldn't divide Christians within the same church. Members should be able to discuss these in love, remain in fellowship, and serve together.	Views of the end times, length of the creation days, the extent of God's sovereignty in salvation, etc.
DISAGREE	Doctrines that do not impact our gospel witness and ministry collaboration.	The number of angels that exist, the exact identity of the Nephilim (Gen. 6), whether Adam & Eve had belly buttons, etc.

Adapted from "Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage" by Gavin Ortlund

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Do you find the idea of theological triage helpful?*
- *What's an issue you might place in each category?*

Understanding this, here are doctrinal distinctives we hold to and teach at Faith Baptist. These do not replace or contradict our Affirmation of Faith, rather they fit within it.

A BELIEF IN ELDER-LED CONGREGATIONALISM

Like Baptist churches throughout history, Faith is a congregational church. This means that the members of the congregation collectively have the final authority in matters of church **doctrine** and **discipline**. We will discuss this further in *Week 5 - Church Membership*, but here are two examples from the New Testament that indicate this:

1. **Doctrine** - In Galatians 1:9, Paul, writing to the church in Galatia, warns them, *"If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed."* It was the collective responsibility of the members of the church in Galatia to guard against false doctrine.

2. **Discipline** - In 1 Corinthians 5:2, Paul, writing to the church in Corinth instructs them to discipline the adulterous man saying, *"Let him who has done this be removed from among you."* It was the collective responsibility of the members of the church in Corinth to discipline the unrepentant member who was living in sin.

While we are congregational we are also elder-led. In the New Testament we see local churches being led by a plurality men called "elders/overseers/pastors." These terms are used interchangeably in the Bible and all point to one office.

- **"Elder"** - Titus 1:5, *"...appoint elders..."*
- **"Overseer"** - Titus 1:7, *"...an overseer..."* 1 Timothy 3:1, *"If anyone aspires to the office of overseer,"*
- **"Pastor"** - 1 Peter 5:1-2 - *"...I exhort the elders...shepherd (lit. pastor) the flock of God..."*

At Faith we generally use the terms "elder" and "pastor" to refer to those who hold this office. Our Elder Counsil is comprised of men who meet the qualifications laid out in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9. Their responsibility is to lead by shepherding the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-2). Some minister full-time (vocationally), and some as lay elders, but all serve in the same office as indicated in Scripture. For a list of our current elders, see the Appendix beginning on page 92.

A BELIEF IN DISTINCT BUT COMPLEMENTARY MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ROLES

The word "complement" means "to complete." In accordance with Scripture, we believe that men and women have been given roles within the life of the church that differ but complement each other. When we order things according to God's design for men and women the church functions in a *complete* way. We seek to do this without going beyond what the Bible teaches and restricting anyone from serving in a way that Scripture doesn't prohibit.

One of the ways we see this applied is in how Faith is led. We believe the Bible teaches that the office of Pastor/Elder is reserved for qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). Additionally, we believe the practice of teaching and preaching the word in the gathered church is also reserved for men (1 Tim. 2:12). At the same time, we joyfully celebrate the gifts God has given to the women of our church. Women serve in many areas where they use a variety of gifts including teaching. Our heart in all of this is to trust God's design for the church, and rejoice in the variety of gifts he gives to the body. For more, see ***"The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood"*** in the Appendix..

A WARM, WINSOME BELIEF IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

We recognize that Christians have debated the specifics of the doctrines of God's sovereignty for centuries. At Faith we welcome all into membership who profess faith in Christ, have been baptized, and can agree with our Affirmation of Faith. At the same time, in our teaching and preaching, we hold to the view that God is sovereign in all things, including salvation. We hold this doctrine with great humility, understanding that it is God's grace alone that changes the hearts of sinners and brings them from spiritual death to new life in Christ.

We believe that holding to this doctrine in no way negates the free offer of the gospel. Scripture makes it clear that the good news of Jesus Christ is to be proclaimed to all nations (Matt. 28:19) with-

 out discintion. Therefore, we believe and teach the following at Faith:

1. **Salvation is a sovereign work of God alone** - John 6:44; Ephesians 1:4-5; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 2:8-9
2. **The gospel is to be prolcaimed to all freely and without distinction** - Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8
3. **All who turn to Christ and believe will be saved** - John 3:16, 3:36, 6:37, Romans 10:13

While this is the majority position at Faith, we do not believe it should be a barrier to our fellowship together and we would encourage differences on this doctrine to be dealt with according to the ***"Discuss"*** category in the **Theological Triage** chart above.

CONCLUSION

Being up front about our distinctives helps further promote ***clarity*** and ***unity*** at Faith. At the same time, it's important for all members of our church to do *theological triage* about areas where we may disagree. What's central to our unity is ultimately the gospel of Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **Do you believe it's important for a church to be clear with it's distinctives? Why or why not?**
- **How can a church maintain unity why there's disagreement on some doctrines?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Take some time to reflect on doctrines you believe from Scripture. How would you do theological triage with these doctrines?**

WEEK 4 NOTES

WELCOME TO WO

WEEK 5 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

Church Membership

"For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
Romans 12:4-5

"To the church of God that is in Corinth,"
1 Corinthians 1:2a

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

For the past four weeks we've covered a lot of ground about Faith's gospel doctrine. Hopefully by now you have a good sense about what we believe and why we believe it. Another important belief that we hold to at Faith and that we share in common with many churches is **meaningful church membership.** For some, this session may be "preaching to the choir." But for others, there may be some objections to the idea of church membership. Some might ask, *"Is it biblical?"* or *"Why don't we see the term 'church membership' in Scripture?"* We hope that this lesson will give you a better understanding of why we believe and practice formal church membership at Faith.

THE MEANING OF "MEMBER"

Webster's Dictionary defines "member" as "one of the individuals composing a group." To be a member of something simply means to *belong* to it. Christ stated in Scripture that he came to build his church (Matt. 16:18). Therefore, every true believer *belongs* to his church. Where disagreements on this matter arise depends on how one understands the term "church" and how one formally identifies with the church.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The word "church" in English is translated in our Bibles from the Greek word *"ekklesia,"* which literally means "assembly." In our Affirmation of Faith that we looked at in Week 3, we saw this statement in Section VIII, *The Church,*

> *"We believe in the **universal church**, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the **local church**, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world."*

Note in this statement that it refers to the church in two ways, 1). universal, and 2). local. While Christ does not have two churches, there are ***two expressions*** of his church in Scripture. Both concepts are important if we are to understand what it means to be a "member" of his church.

1. **<u>The Universal Church</u>** - This is sometimes referred to as the "invisible church." The universal church is one spiritual body comprised of all the elect from every nation, tribe, language, and tongue, past, present, and future who will be united to Christ and reign with him when he comes again at the consummation of the age. It crosses all cultural, ethnic, geographical, denominational, national, socio-economic, and linguistic lines (1 Cor. 12:13, Rev. 7:9, 19:9, 22:4-5).It can therefore be said that everyone who is a true Christian is a member of Christ's universal church.

2. **<u>The Local Church</u>** -This is how we see the word "church" used in the New Testament the majority of the time. The local church is characterized as a visible assembly of believers who regularly gathers for worship, covenants together to carry out the mission of the church, and serves as a witness to and manifestation of God's Kingdom on earth. The local church's mission is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, make disciples of all nations, baptize them in the name of the Triune God, and teach these disciples to follow and obey Christ's commands (Matt. 28:18-20).

All true believers are members of Christ's universal church. But, is this all there is to being a Christian? Should a believer in Christ simply say, *"I believe the gospel. I'm just going to stay home and read my Bible. It's just me and Jesus!"*? If we examine what the Bible teaches, the answer is clearly "no." The overwhelming assumption of the New Testament is that Christians will live together in vital, committed, life-giving relationships with one another, carrying out the Great Commission. This is seen in the many **"one another"** commands of the New Testament. Below is just a sample of some of these. Each of these was written to **local assemblies (i.e. churches)** with the understanding that they would be carried out in community with other believers.

- *"Love **one another**" - (Romans 13:8)*
- *"Be devoted to **one another** in brotherly love..." - (Romans 12:10)*
- *"Honor **one another** above yourselves" - (Romans 12:10)*
- *"Live in harmony with **one another**..." - (Romans 12:16)*
- *"Stop passing judgment on **one another**" - (Romans 14:13)*
- *"Accept **one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you..." - (Romans 15:7)*
- *"Serve **one another** in love" - (2 Corinthians 13:12)*
- *"Carry **each other's** burdens..." - (Galatians 6:20)*
- *"Be patient, bearing with **one another** in love" - (Ephesians 4:2)*
- *"Be kind and compassionate to **one another**..." - (Ephesians 4:32)*
- *"Speak to **one another** with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" - (Ephesians 5:19)*
- *"Submit to **one another** out of reverence for Christ" - (Ephesians 5:21)*
- *"In humility consider **others** better than yourselves" - (Philippians 2:3)*
- *"Bear with **each other**..." - (Colossians 3:13)*
- *"Admonish **one another**" - (Colossians 3:16)*
- *"Build **each other** up..." - (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*
- *"Encourage **one another** daily..." - (Hebrews 3:13)*
- *"Spur **one another** on toward love and good deeds" - (Hebrews 10:24)*

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *Who are these commands written to?*
- *How can these commands be carried out?*

WHAT IS LOCAL CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

Again, some will object to formal local church membership sometimes on the basis that the phrase or concept does not appear in the Bible. But, we would argue that Scripture gives believers commands that only make sense in the context of a formalized relationship with a local church. Here are three examples:

1. **Following Church Leadership** - *"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." - Hebrews 13:17*

   The writer of Hebrews admonishes his audience to obey their leaders. The reason for this is that they were accountable to God for the souls in their care. Who are the elders of Faith Baptist accountable to God to care for? For all the Christians in Sioux Falls? South Dakota? America? Ultimately the elders are responsible to care for those who are have acknowledged them to be their elders.This points to a formallized relationship where a believer recognizes our elders as his or her spiritual shepherds and the elders understand that they are responsible for the believer.

2. **Committing to Fellowship and Accountability** - *"But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. 'Purge the evil person from among you.'" - 1 Corinthians 5:11-13*

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

   In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he gives instructions to the church on how to deal with fellow believers who are living in sin. His words indicate that there was an understanding even in the early church of those who were **inside** and **outside** the church. Those who were inside were recognized as being part of the body and were accountable to other believers within the church. This only makes sense in the context of a formalized relationship with a local church.

3. **Fulfilling The "One Another" Commands of Scripture** - On page 28 we looked at some of the "one another" statements in the New Testament. While we certainly want to follow these commands in our interactions with all brothers and sisters in Christ everywhere, it's important to remember that these commands were given in the context of letters written to local churches. The epistles written to the various churches in the New Testament assumed that believers were in committed fellowship with one another. Apart from this context, many of these "one another" imperatives do not make sense.

Having looked at these three points, we can summarize what we mean by church membership in the following way:

> *Church membership is the act of formally identifying with a local church body by willingly **following** its biblical leadership, **committing** to fellowship and mutual accountability with that body, and **fulfilling** the "one another" commands of the New Testament with other members of that community.*

IS A MEMBERSHIP PROCESS BIBLICAL?

Membership in Christ's universal (or invisible) church occurs by a miraculous heart change. God brings a sinner from spiritual death to spiritual life. Jesus knows his own sheep (John 10:14) and knows their hearts. Therefore, there's no "membership process" for joining the universal church other than repentance and faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice alone.

If members of Christ's universal church, however, are to be part of a visible, local church, how does that church know who should be accepted and who shouldn't? Members of a local church cannot see the hearts of others to know if someone is truly in Christ. Additionally, Scripture warns believers about "false prophets" and "wolves" in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). It tells them that there are even "many" who will be revealed on the day of judgement to be false believers (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus talked about "sheep" being separated from "goats" at the final judgement (Matt. 25:31-46). And Paul warns about "false brothers" (Gal. 2:4). Therefore, a local church would be unwise to simply accept anyone as a member without some kind of process of evaluation.

Scripture makes it clear that we as believers will ultimately know other believers by their "fruits" (Matt. 7:16, Lk. 6:43-44). It also instructs us to do things with wisdom (Eph. 5:15). Therefore, local churches must seek wisdom from God when discerning who should be formalized as a member of a local church. A membership process is simply a way in which a local church wisely discerns who should be admitted as a member.

BECOMING A MEMBER AT FAITH

Joining a local church is an important commitment, one that should be made with careful and prayerful consideration. At Faith our membership process is not meant to be a burden. Rather, we want all who are considering joining our church to get to know us and to give us a chance to get to know them better. Our four steps to membership are as follows:

1. **Faith Foundations** - This class that you are a part of right now is not meant to add an unnecessary step in becoming a member at Faith. Rather, we believe it's important that all of our members are aligned in doctrine and culture. This is also an opportunity for you if you're not a member to prayerfully consider whether or not Faith is the right church home for you.

2. **Membership Questionnaire** - After learning about us in Faith Foundations and prayerfully considering membership, if you feel the Lord is leading you to make Faith your church home, we ask that you let our elders know by filling out our Membership Questionnaire. This can be found online at FaithSF.com/join. Husbands and wives should each fill out their own questionnaire.

3. **Elder Interview** - After submitting the questionnaire, an elder from Faith Baptist will connect with you to arrange a time for an interview. Husbands and wives are interviewed separately usually by 2-3 elders. An elder's wife will be present to interview any female membership candidates. During the interview the elders will ask you questions about things like your family, interests, hobbies and you'll have an opportunity to share your testimony about how Christ has changed your life.

4. **Congregational Vote** - As a congregational church, all new members are voted in by our current members at one of our member meetings. An elder will introduce you and make a recommendation for membership to the body. Your membership will be confirmed by a vote of those members present.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP?

To become a member at Faith is to be "all in!" All members agree to our Membership Covenant which can be found on page 6 of our Bylaws (see Appendix). Additionally, all members have an important responsibilty to help guide and direct the affairs of the church. For a detailed list of what this entails see *Membership: Right and Responsibilities* on page 7 of our Bylaws (see Appendix on page 92).

WHAT IF I NEED MORE TIME?

If you feel you need more time to pray and consider making Faith your church home, we're here to help in any way we can. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to set up an appointment with any of our Pastors/Elders. You can do this by calling the church office at 605.331.3800 or connecting with one of us personally on Sunday or during the week. As you prayerfully consider, we encourage you to still participate in the life of our church. Get involved in a Faith Group, find ways to serve, get plugged into Bible studies, and outreach opportunities!

CONCLUSION

We hope through this lesson you've come to see the importance of being in committed fellowship with a local church. If you still have questions or reservations about church membership, we encourage you to let us know. We'd love to discuss it further!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?
- What questions did this lesson prompt?
- In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?
- Do you believe it's important for a Christian to be a member of a local church? Why or why not?

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- Read through the section on Membership in our Bylaws, found in pages 5-8 (see Appendix).

WEEK 5 NOTES

WEEK 6 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

The Ordinances: Baptism

"We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."
Romans 6:4

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

In Week 5 we looked at why it's biblical to be committed and accountable to a local church body in membership. For the next two weeks we'll look at the two ways in which the local church visually displays the gospel corporately through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

SEEING THE WORD: WHAT ARE THE ORDINANCES?

Have you ever been part of a church that liked to put on skits or plays? Perhaps you've been to a church Christmas play where kids dressed up and acted out the story of Jesus' birth. As entertaining as these things can be, there are actually two reenactments of Biblical events that the church not only regularly does but is commanded to do. The reenactment of these two events has been "ordained" by Christ, and therefore we call them **ordinances**.

The ordinances of baptism and The Lord's Supper (or Communion) are instituted by Christ and given to the church to be carried out corporately as symbolic reenactments of the gospel message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. When we observe them we ***see the word*** proclaimed. Baptists normally do not use the term "sacrament," as it is commonly associated with the belief that God imparts saving grace merely through the outward act of the ritual.

WHAT IS BELIEVER'S BAPTISM?

You may have noticed that various churches and denominations differ on baptism. Some baptize infants and little children, while others only baptize those who profess faith in Christ. Some sprinkle water on the recipient while others immerse the person in water. It is our aim that in this lesson you will come to understand what "believer's baptism" is, why we believe it to be scriptural, and how we practice it here at Faith. For the purposes of this study, we'll use this definition of believer's baptism:

> ***Believer's baptism is a church's act of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ by immersing him or her in water, and a believer's act of publicly committing him or herself to Christ and identifying with his people.***

In our lesson today, we'll seek to gain a better understanding of why we believe this by breaking down this definition.

"Believer's baptism is a church's act..."

In the Great Commission Jesus told his disciples, *"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,"* (Matthew 28:19). Later we see the disciples obeying this command. In Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost after Peter preached many believed the message of the gospel. It says that "...those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." – Acts 2:41. The church continues this practice throughout the New Testament. When someone professed faith in Christ, they were baptized by the church.

"...of affirming and portraying a believer's union with Christ..."

This statement asserts that two things are happening when one is baptized:

1. It **Affirms** a believer's union with Christ - When it comes to administering baptism the church has a big responsibility. By baptizing someone, the church is saying "This person has given a good testimony of faith and is now part of God's family." Therefore, a church should take care to ensure a person desiring baptism understands the gospel and what it means to follow Christ.
2. It **Portrays** a believer's union with Christ - The physical act of going down into the water and coming up again *depicts* the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the person being baptized this also represents the "old person" dying and the "new person" being raised to life. This visually and publicly identifies the person being baptized with Jesus Christ.

> *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was **raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." – Romans 6:3-4*

"...by immersing him or her in water,"

Why do we as Baptists place such an emphasis upon the mode of baptism? This conviction isn't rooted in tradition or preference, but in Scripture. The Greek word *baptizo*, from which we get the word "baptize," in almost every case refers to dipping or plunging someone or something into water. This is consistent with how we see baptism carried out in the New Testament:

> *And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. **And when they came up out of the water,** the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. - Acts 8:36-39*

The practice of baptism in the New Testament, combined with the understanding that baptism visually represents being "buried" with Christ and being "raised from the dead," leads us to conclude that baptism is to be by immersion.

"and a believer's act..."

While the church *baptizes,* and a believer *gets baptized*, it is still something that a professing believer is doing. Scripture teaches us that the way a believer should normally declare his or her faith is through baptism.

- *"And Peter said to them, "Repent and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." — Acts 2:38*
- *"So **those who received his word were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls." — Acts 2:41*
- *"But **when they believed Philip** as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women." — Acts 8:12*
- *"And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and [Paul] regained his sight. Then **he rose and was baptized**;" - Acts 9:18*
- *"Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, **believed in the Lord**, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed **and were baptized**." — Acts 18:8*

Scripture instructs followers of Jesus to be baptized, *and* it is something a believer must decide on his or her own to do.

"...of publicly committing him or herself to Christ..."

Believer's baptism is how Christ has ordained that his followers publicly profess faith in Christ. For some Christians this can be scary. In the book *Understanding Baptism* by Pastor Bobby Jamieson, he offers these reassuring words,

> ***"If you're uneasy about going public with your faith, look at baptism as a help rather than a hurdle. Jesus hasn't left it up to your boldness or creativity to figure out how to declare yourself a Christian; he's shown you how to do it. He's made it simple. All you have to do is profess your faith in Christ and then lean back and hold your breath." — Jamieson, pg. 11***

We believe that Jesus commands all of his followers to follow in his footsteps, symbolically identifying themselves with him in his death, burial and resurrection through baptism and would encourage any who might be wrestling with this to talk to one of our pastors/elders.

Baptism not only demonstrates a believer's commitment to Christ, but also declares that he or she is part of God's people. We see this in Scripture:

> *"So those who received his word were **baptized**, and there were **added** that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread and the prayers.**" — Acts 2:41-42*

When we publicly declare that we are committed to Jesus Christ, we are saying that we are on a "new team" with everyone else who is committed to him. It is like putting on the "team Jersey." A believer is saying, "I'm on this team now."

COMPARING VIEWS ON BAPTISM

<table>
<tr><th>OTHER VIEWS</th><th>BAPTIST</th></tr>
<tr><td>Roman Catholic: Catholicism teaches that the act of baptism actually saves a person. They believe that the act of baptism administered to an infant frees the child from "a fallen human nature...tainted by original sin."</td><td rowspan="3">Baptism is administered to believers only. It is a public, symbolic, declarative act outwardly representing the inward spiritual heart change and one becoming a child of God through faith in the sacrificial act of His Son Jesus Christ.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mainline Protestant/Sacremental: Baptism imparts saving grace to those who receive it. In the case of infants, the faith must be "nurtured and fed by the word." Thus baptism in infants regenerates the child, in essence making them a Christian. They may later walk away from the faith.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evangelical Reformed/Covenantal: Baptism is a "sign" and a "seal" of entrance into the covenant. Baptism does NOT save, regenerate a person, or wash away sin. It is an outward sign of being joined with God's covenant people in Christ, paralleled with circumcision in the Old Testament. Infants who are baptized are expected to profess or "confirm" faith later.</td></tr>
</table>

Q&A - BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Is baptism really important? While baptism is not required for salvation, obedience and submission to the revealed will of God is important for believers. Now that you've seen the biblical foundation for baptism, what would keep you from following through with God's revealed will?

Can I be baptized privately? Jesus was baptized publicly and we believe baptism is an individual's declaration that he or she has died and been raised with Christ. We believe that the local church should witness, affirm, and celebrate that declaration. Furthermore, our conviction is that believers should be encouraged to live their faith out publicly.

If I was baptized as an infant, do I need to be re-baptized? We strongly encourage all believers to obey and follow Jesus in being baptized by immersion following their own conversion. This includes those who were baptized as infants. Some people feel this will be hurtful to their families who baptized them and that somehow they are declaring their infant baptism "invalid." While we don't agree with other traditions about infant baptism we don't think that asking people to be re-baptized needs to be taken this way. We humbly ask you to study the Scriptures and be convinced in your own heart. We are happy to baptize you when/if you are ready.

Why is baptism required for membership? Hopefully we've shown that the Bible assigns significant gospel meaning to baptism. Because we want to present the gospel clearly, we feel that a local church should be consistent when it comes to things that carry gospel significance. We understand that many Christians who agree with us about the gospel think differently about baptism. We are comfortable with these differences on a broad level. However, at the local church level where Christians are daily partnering side-by-side to advance the gospel in a community, we believe it is important to be unified in our understanding on baptism so as not to cause confusion.

Isn't this legalistic to require baptism for membership? We strive to be gracious in all things when we have disagreements with other believers about secondary doctrines. By no means do we believe one is "not saved" if he or she isn't baptized. And we certainly enjoy fellowship at times with other Christians who hold to different views of baptism. But first and foremost, we strive to be obedient to Scripture. We trust one of the reasons you've expressed interest in joining Faith Baptist is because we are a church that's committed to obeying God's word. As we've studied the issue of baptism, we believe Scripture is clear that baptism is for believers by immersion. Therefore, our consciences are bound to obey what Scripture teaches. If you're still struggling with this issue, we'd love to talk with you further. We don't want you to take this step under pressure or feel coerced. Our desire is for you to come to the same conclusions about baptism because you believe it is what the Bible teaches, not just because it is something that Faith Baptist Fellowship does.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *How important is it that a Christian be baptized?*
- *Does the mode of baptism matter? Why or why not?*
- *What might you say to a Christian who is hesitant to be baptized?*

BAPTISM AT FAITH BAPTIST

Baptism services are held at Faith several times a year. An announcement will be put in the worship bulletin when a baptism service is coming up. You can express interest in baptism by marking the box next to "I would like to be baptized" on your Faith Card. One of the pastors will then reach out to you to setup a meeting with you to talk more about it.

CONCLUSION

Baptism isn't magic or a religious ritual. It is a public announcement that one has fully trusted in Christ's finished work when he died on the cross. It "putting on the jersey" and saying, "I'm with team Jesus now!"

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **Has your understanding of believer's baptism in any way changed because of this lesson? If so, in what ways?**
- **If you've been baptized as a believer, in what ways has this lesson helped and encouraged you?**
- **If you haven't been baptized as a believer, do you think you should? Why or why not?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Take a moment to either memorize the definition of baptism or study it further in order to be able to better explain it to others.**
- **If you have a Christian friend who hasn't yet been baptized, prayerfully and lovingly talk with him or her about considering taking that step.**

WEEK 6 NOTES

WEEK 7 - GOSPEL DOCTRINE

The Ordinances: The Lord's Supper

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
1 Corinthians 11:26

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

Last week we introduced the ordinances and saw that they were visual reenactments of the gospel message. These have been *ordained* by Christ as a way to ***see the word*** when the church gather's for corporate worship. We looked at baptism, the first of the two ordinances, and saw how it depicts Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. By being baptized a believer identifies with Christ and his people and publically declares his or her faith. This week we will look at the second ordinance, the Lord's Supper.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Food can affect us in many ways beyond just satisfying our hunger. The smells, sounds, tastes and textures of different foods can bring up fond (or not so fond) memories. We might smell cinnamon and spice and think "It smells like Christmas." Maybe the smell and sound of bacon sizzling in the pan take us back to Grandma's house as a child. Or perhaps you've tasted something before and thought "This is just like my mother used to make!" The Lord's Supper (also called "Communion") is like this in many ways. While the little piece of bread and the little sip of juice may seem small, they serve as significant reminders of what Jesus Christ has done for his people.

THE ROOTS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Though it is a New Testament ordinance, the Lord's Supper actually has its roots in the Old Testament. In Exodus 12 God instituted the Passover for the people of Israel as a memorial of their salvation and how he delivered them out of captivity in Egypt. The people were to slaughter a lamb, spread the blood on the doorposts of their houses, and eat a meal together. The blood signified atonement for sin, and all those in the house would be saved God's judgement.

> *"This day shall be for you a **memorial** day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast." — Exodus 12:14" — Acts 2:41-42*

Fast forward approximately 1,400 years, and in Luke 22 we see Jesus celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. It is at this Passover celebration that Jesus institutes a ***new memorial***, one in which the people of God will ***remember*** his salvation not through the body and blood of a lamb, but through the perfect sacrifice – himself! The Passover finds its fulfillment in Christ.

*"And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is **my body**, which is given for you. Do this in **remembrance** of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my **blood**." — Luke 22:14-20*

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER

As with baptism, various churches and denominations may practice the Lord's Supper differently. It is our aim that in this lesson you will come to understand what the Lord's Supper is, what Scripture teaches about it, and how we practice it here at Faith Baptist. For the purposes of this study, we offer this definition of the Lord's Supper:

> ***The Lord's Supper is a church's corporate act of remembering and proclaiming Christ's salvation through his atoning sacrifice by partaking of bread, representing his body, and the cup, representing his blood, and a believer's act of acknowledging Christ's benefits and renewing his or her commitment to Christ together in fellowship with other believers, until Christ returns.***

As with last week's lesson, we'll seek to gain a better understanding of why we believe this by breaking down this definition:

"The Lord's Supper is a church's corporate act..."

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to celebrate the Passover as one people in their respective households with their families and neighbors. In Luke 22, Jesus eats the Passover with his disciples. By the time the New Testament church was established, the Lord's Supper had become a regular practice of the church, something they did **together** when they assembled to remember Christ's sacrifice. First Corinthians 11 makes this clear.

- *"because **when you come together** it is not for the better but for the worse." (11:17)*
- *"**when you come together** as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you." (11:18)*
- *"**When you come together**, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat." (11:20)*
- *"So then, my brothers, **when you come together** to eat, wait for one another" (11:33)*
- *"if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that **when you come together** it will not be for judgement." (11:34)*

The Lord's Supper was something the church was meant to do **together** as the people of God. It is not intended to be a private meal among friends, or an individualistic act.

"...of remembering and proclaiming Christ's salvation through his atoning sacrifice..."

When the Israelites celebrated the Passover, it was a both a **reminder** of God's salvation personally as well as an opportunity to **proclaim** his salvation to the next generation (Ex. 13:8). Likewise for believers, when we partake of the Lord's Supper we **remember** Christ's salvation, reflecting upon how he has saved us, and we **proclaim** his death.

> *"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in **remembrance** of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in **remembrance** of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you **proclaim** the Lord's death until he comes." — 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

"...by partaking of bread, representing his body, and the cup, representing his blood..."

We refer to the ordinances as ***"the word seen"*** because by them our senses are engaged with the truths they represent. The Lord's Supper gives us a visible, tangible representation of what we believe in by faith. Pastor Bobby Jamieson in his book on the Lord's Supper says this,

> ***"The acts of breaking and eating bread, of pouring out and drinking the wine, dramatically present the events of the gospel to our sight and taste." - Jamieson, pg. 27***

When we observe the Lord's Supper, our eyes see the elements. Our hands hold the bread and the cup. Our tastebuds are engaged. As Christians although we do not see Christ now, we believe in him by faith. But when we partake of the Lord's Supper we are reminded that he is real! His *real* body was broken. His *real* blood was shed. And one day our eyes will see him. One day our hands will feel the nail prints in his hands. One day we will feast with him in the New Heavens and the New Earth, and our faith will become sight!

As we do this it is important to remember that these elements **represent** the body and blood of Christ. We would reject any teaching that would say they are miraculously changed or that Christ's actual body and blood are mysteriously present when we take the Lord's Supper. The elements themselves do not impart grace. Rather, when we receive them by faith, we experience the grace of seeing the word preached.

"...and a believer's act of acknowledging Christ's benefits..."

When we take the bread and the cup, we are saying "I believe this is true, that Jesus' body was broken for ***me*** and his blood shed for ***my*** sins. He is ***my*** Savior." Therefore, the Lord's Supper should not be taken by someone who doesn't believe these things.

 Scripture also warns against taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27). The Lord's Supper is for sinners made new in Christ and who are still being sanctified. Therefore, our worthiness to partake of it is based not in ourselves, but rather the finished work of Christ. We become "worthy" to feast at the Lord's Table if we are resting in the One who is worthy. At the same time, what distinguishes a true believer from a false one is genuine faith in Christ that bears the fruit of ongoing repentance and belief in the gospel. Believers are called to to self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28). For this reason, when we observe the Lord's Supper at Faith we exhort all in attendance to examine themselves and highlight three important Biblical truths for those who partake:

1. **One should be a believer** - The Lord's Supper is for true believers who are trusting in Christ alone for salvation. See 1 Corinthians 11:27
2. **One should not be living in willful, unrepentant sin** - This does not refer to true believers who struggle with temptation, fail, and need Christ's grace and mercy. This refers to someone living in willful, knowing, rebellion against God with no intention of stopping. See 1 John 1:6-10
3. **One should be in fellowship with Christ's body** - A lack of love for Christ's people in Scripture is equated in Scripture with a lack of love for God himself (1 John 4:7-11). Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Paul explicitly connects the elements of the Lord's Supper with the unity of the church body. The taking of the Lord's Supper cannot be divorced from the idea of being in fellowship with the body of Christ, the church.

"...and renewing his or her commitment to Christ..."

As believers we still sin. We are still frail and stumble in many ways. At times our faith may be weak. The physical signs of the bread and the cup present us with an opportunity for our faith to be strengthened as we remember that our salvation is not by our own works, or on the basis of our own merits, but in Christ alone. As we take the Lord's Supper together we encourage all to examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28), repent, and trust in the finished work of Christ.

"...together with other believers..."

As has already been stated, the corporate aspect of the Lord's Supper clearly seen in Scripture. But as we take it, the act of doing it together reminds us of our unity in Christ. As believers we have been adopted into God's family. Therefore, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we have the blessing of doing it with other believers, rejoicing with them that we have been adopted into this new family together, that we are brothers and sisters and share in the same eternal hope. As Paul reminds us,

> *"The cup of blessing that **we** bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that **we** break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, **we who are many are one body**, for we all partake of the one bread." — 1 Corinthians 10:16-17*

The people of God taking the Lord's supper is part of the ongoing proclamation of the gospel by the church until Jesus Christ returns. As Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 11:26, *"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*

COMPARING VIEWS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

<table>
<tr><th>OTHER VIEWS</th><th>BAPTIST</th></tr>
<tr><td>Roman Catholic: Catholicism teaches that the elements (the bread and the wine) are changed ("transubstantiated") in the literal body and blood of Christ. Partaking of them is efficacious to salvation (i.e. it saves).</td><td rowspan="3">The Lord's Supper is to be taken by those who profess faith in Christ and have examined themselves. It is a memorial meal that symbolically proclaims the death of Jesus Christ—the bread representing the breaking of his body, and the cup representing his shed blood. Through participation in the Lord's Supper the believer experiences grace in remembering Christ's salvation and his or her forgiveness of sins.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mainline Protestant/Sacremental: Many in this category hold to "Real Presence" ("consubstantiation.") In this view, the elements of the bread and wine are not changed, but through the consecration, the body and blood of Christ literally become present with the elements. Partaking of communion imparts grace to those who receive it.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Evangelical Reformed/Covenantal: In the Lord's Supper, Christ is truly and spiritually present, not in the elements themselves but by the Holy Spirit. Believers who partake in faith are spiritually nourished and strengthened in their union with Christ. The Supper is a sacrament and a means of grace, confirming the promises of the gospel and deepening communion with Christ and with one another.</td></tr>
</table>

Q&A - THE LORD'S SUPPER

How often do you take the Lord's Supper at Faith Baptist? We observe the Lord's Supper the first Sunday of each month.

Do I need to be a member to take the Lord's Supper? No, we practice open communion at Faith. During our communion services the pastor who is giving the words of institution will give three points of instruction. First, that the Lord's Supper is for those that are believing and trusting in "Christ alone for salvation." Secondly, that one should not be in willful, unrepentant sin. And thirdly, that one should be "in fellowship with other believers."

What does it mean to be "in fellowship with other believers?" This is not meant to be overly restrictive as a believer may be presently seeking fellowship with a church, limited by health or other circumstances, or perhaps returning to fellowship with believers after a season. The point of this admonition is to remind people that as our Christian lives are not meant to be individualistic. The Lord's supper is something we do together. It depicts our unity with Christ and with one another.

Why do you use grape juice and not wine? Many churches use "wine" in the proper sense, meaning fermented grape juice. While this is, of course, perfectly acceptable, we believe "the fruit of the vine" (Matthew 22:18) is a faithful Scriptural representation of Christ's blood. Additionally some may come from a background where alcohol has been or still is a struggle for them. Not wanting in any way to present a stumbling block to a brother or sister in Christ, our elders have chosen to use non-fermented grape juice in communion.

CONCLUSION

Like Baptism, the Lord's Supper isn't magic or a religious ritual. It is a corporate act that we as believers engage in and by which we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. If you have any concerns about our view of the Lord's Supper at Faith Baptist, or questions about partaking, please speak with one of our elders or staff pastors. We'd be happy to talk with you.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **Has your understanding of The Lord's Supper in any way changed because of this lesson? If so, in what ways?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Take a moment to either memorize the definition of the Lord's Supper or study it further in order to be able to better explain it to others.**

WEEK 7 NOTES

WEEK 8 - GOSPEL CULTURE

Love God & Commit to Gathered Worship

"...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."
Mark 12:30

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

"Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture." We want to be a church where the gospel is both changing each life personally, and all of our lives corporately as a family of believers. As we seek to pursue our vision and carry out our mission we desire to remained focused. In 2010 our elders identified Five Loves and Five Commitments for our church. These have been discribed as "five guideposts" to help keep us grounded and focused on who we are and what we are called to do. They also help us assess and evaluate our progress as we make disciples. Over the next five weeks of Faith Foundations we will discuss each of these and see the practical ways they are impacting the life of our church and guiding us in ministry.

LOVE GOD

The Bible commands us to love God, so, it's not optional. But, loving God should not be drudgery. Rather, it should flow from a heart of gratitude and joy because of who God is and what he has done for us in Christ Jesus. At Faith we desire to be a people who love God and are always growing in our love for him. One of the primary ways we do that is through our gathered worship. As we look at the first of our Five Loves today, we hope to see the connection between loving God and joyfully gathering with his people each week to worship him.

OUR PROBLEM

How much do we have to love God in order to keep his command. In Mark 12 one of the religious leaders comes to Jesus and asks him a question, *"Which commandment is the most important of all?"* Jesus answered the man saying, ***"The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'"*** (Mark 12:29-30). This answer may seem straightforward, but when we consider the full magnitude of what Jesus is saying, we're faced with a problem. To love God in the way that his law demands means that in every thought, word, and deed, at every moment of our lives, with every facet of our being, we love him supremely above all else. If we're honest, we know that even the most spiritual person on his or her best day falls short of this kind of love for God.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- *What does God's command to love him demand of us?*
- *Can we, in our own strength, love God the way we should?*

 Where does that leave us? The Bible describes our natural spiritual condition in these ways:

1. Spiritually **Dead** - *"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."* - Ephesians 2:1-3

2. Spiritually **Blind** - *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."* - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

3. Spiritually **Lost** - *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* - Luke 19:10

4. Spiritually **Hard-Hearted** - *"But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."* - Romans 2:5

If we in our natural, sinful state are spiritually dead, blind, lost, and hard-hearted, what hope do we have? How can we ever truly love God? We need a miracle!

GOD'S SOLUTION

The solution to that problem is that God performs that miracle of conversion. **HE takes the initiative.** As 1 John 4:10 states, ***"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that HE LOVED US and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*** The coming of Jesus Christ to die on the cross in the place of sinners like us is God making the first move. God does not wait for us to love him first. That's impossible. Instead, ***"God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Rom. 5:8). When God effectively works salvation in someone's life, his or her spiritual condition changes. The Bible describes it in these ways:

1. Spiritually **Alive** - *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—"* - Ephesians 2:4-5

2. Spiritually **Sighted** - *"Jesus said, 'For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.'"* - John 9:39

3. Spiritually **Found** - *"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."* - Colossians 1:13-14

4. Spiritually **Tenderhearted** - *"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."* - Ezekiel 36:26-27

The promise that God made to his people in Ezekiel 36:26-27 finds its fulfillment in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In salvation, God does a miracle by taking out the hard, unbelieving, rebellious heart that does not love him (the heart of stone) and replaces it with a new heart that loves him and wants to obey and worship him alone (the heart of flesh). God performs spiritual **heart transplant surgery** on us!

> *"For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." — 2 Corinthians 4:6*

SO, CAN WE TRULY LOVE GOD?

How then can we love God? When God saves us he himself gives us hearts that truly loves him! But why even as believers do we struggle to love him as we ought? If we have new hearts, why do we fail to love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength?

There's a tension that we experience as believers in this life. When God saves us, all of our sins are completely atoned for (Col. 2:13-14). No more guilt remains. But God doesn't merely make us a "clean slate," he also ***jusitifies*** us (declares us righteous), not on the basis of our works, but because of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 5:1, Phil. 3:9). Therefore, we can stand before God not only innocent, but as those who are counted as having fulfilled the Law of God! At the same time, we still live in our flesh, and our old selves *"wage war"* against us (1 Pet. 2:11). God's Spirit works in us to *"put to death"* our sin and make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:13). This is called ***progressive sancitfication***. So on the one hand, we've been truly given new hearts to love God, and God sees us has having fulfilled that law. On the other, he is refining us and making us love Christ more each day by his Spirit. That is our hope in the first of our Five Loves as part of our gospel culture. We want to be those who truly love God and are growing in our love for him each day!

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- ***How does understanding justification and sanctification help you better understand the command to love God?***

LOVE FOR GOD LEADS TO WORSHIP OF GOD

When God gives us a heart to love him, he gives us a heart to worship him and he makes us part of his a new family that desires to do the same. As we talked about in Week 5, we see in the New Testament this new family gathering into local assemblies (churches) for the purpose of mutual accountability & encouragement, fellowship, serving one another, and spreading the gospel. The high point of their fellowship occurred when they gathered together for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; John 20:19, 26, Rev. 1:10). At Faith we continue this practice each Lord's Day. Our Sunday gatherings are how we come together as a church and corporately declare that God has saved us and made us his own, and we love him.

54 OUR AIM IN WORSHIP AT FAITH

In our worship gatherings we aspire to be ***seriously joyful and joyfully serious***. This is a way of saying that we want to gather with great joy, remembering who our God is and what he has done for us. At the same time, we want to be serious and keep in mind that we are coming into the presence of our holy and righteous God. We want to do so with reverence and awe.

As we gather each Lord's Day we desire to incorporate into our worship the elements we see prescribed in the New Testament.

THE WORD READ & PREACHED

At Faith, we are committed to the reading and faithful preaching of the word. During our gathered worship you'll hear the word read many times. And when the word is preached, one of the pastors or other qualified men will read a portion of God's word and then expound upon it, seeking to clarify the meaning of the text and apply it to our lives today.
(2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Tim. 4:13; Acts 2:42; Rom. 10:13-16)

THE WORD PRAYED

Part of our offense against the spiritual forces that threaten our faith is prayer. We believe that God himself, in his word, has given us the substance of our prayers. During our gathered worship we devote time to prayer, during which we adore and praise God, give him thanks, confess our sins, intercede on behalf others, and petition him to meet our needs.
(Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:1-2, 8; Rom. 15:30)

THE WORD SUNG

We love to sing at Faith and enjoy a mix of theologically rich songs both old and new, accompanied by a variety of instruments in our gathered worship. As we worship together, some people raise their hands and clap while others prefer a more reflective response. We welcome and value both of these as Biblical expressions in corporate worship.
(Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)

THE WORD SEEN

The ordinances of baptism and The Lord's Supper (or Communion) are instituted by Christ and given to the church to be carried out corporately, symbolically reenacting the gospel message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We partake in the Lord's Supper the first Sunday of each month and administer the ordinance of baptism as the need arises.
(Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:33-34)

CONCLUSION

Have you had **"heart transplant surgery?"** If you're uncertain about this, we would also love to talk with you more about how God saves sinners and gives them a new heart to love him. If God has given you a new heart to love him, we invite you to make our gathered worship services each Sunday here at Faith a priority in your life!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **How does understanding the miracle of conversion help you grow in your love for God?**
- **If you're a believer, how can regularly attending corporate worship help you grow in your love for God?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Review the elements of worship at Faith on the previous page and take some time to note these at our next gathered worship service.**
- **Read *"Seriously Joyful and Joyfully Serious: Faith Baptist Fellowship Philosophy of Corporate Worship"*** in the Appendix.

WEEK 8 NOTES

WEEK 9 - GOSPEL CULTURE

Love God's Word & Prayer and Commit to Personal Worship

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."
Psalm 119:105

"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."
Philippians 4:6

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

Last week we looked at the first of our Five Loves, *Love God*, and saw how that connected with our commitment to gather with God's people for worship. When we say that we love God we're not saying that we merely love the *idea* of God. Rather, we love God himself. As we grow in our love for him, we are struck with the remarkable truth that God, the sovereign creator and ruler of the universe, personally communicates with us and invites us to communicate with him. This happens through His word and prayer. As we look into this further this week, we hope to see the connection between these two important aspects of personal worship in our lives.

LOVE GOD'S WORD

As we have already covered in previous weeks, at Faith we want to be people of the word, rooting everything we believe and everything we do in the Scriptures. Note the following from our Affirmation of Faith, *Section I, The Word of God,*

> *"We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct." (John 17:7; Romans 15:4; II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:19-21)*

From this statement let's look at four key truths that are stated or implied:

1. The **Inspiration** of Scripture - We believe the Bible is God's very words to us. As one pastor puts it, "If you want to hear from God, read your Bible. If you want to hear God speak audibly, read your Bible out loud" (Justin Peters). *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

2. The **Inerrancy** of Scripture - We believe that God inspired his word in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages without error. Our faithful English translations today are incredibly accurate and we can trust them. *"The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times."* - Psalm 12:6

3. The **Authority** of Scripture - We believe the Bible is our final standard for what we must believe and how we must live. We must obey it because it is the word of God. *"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."* - Isaiah 40:8

4. The **Sufficiency** of Scripture - We believe that the Bible contains everything we need for salvation and godliness. We don't need anything beyond the Bible to know the will of God. *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether."*- Psalm 19:7-9

KNOWING GOD'S WORD

As we believe these things about the Bible, we want to intentionally engage in ways that will help us know and understand it better. Here are four primary ways we seek to foster a love for God's word at Faith and grow in our knowledge of it:

1. **Reading the Bible** - Reading the Bible is like physical nourishment – you must eat if you're going to survive! Every week we publish the Daily Worship guides to help lead you through different portions of Scripture. You can take advantage of these and other resources we have available to help you get into God's word on a consistent and meaningful basis.

2. **Studying the Bible** - This also includes reading it, but involves going deeper in our understanding about a particular passage or book of the Bible. We offer many opportunities to study the Bible in a structured way through our Faith University and Sunday School classes each semester. Additionally, there are opportunities for both men and women to participate in small group Bible studies. We also encourage regular, personal study of the Bible. There are many great study Bibles and resources that our available in our Resource Center, Library, and ones that we can recommend for purchase online.

3. **Hearing the Bible** - As mentioned in Week 8, the reading and preaching of the word when we gather for worship is central to what we do. It's important to make gathered worship a priority.

4. **Praying the Bible** - Part of our offense against the spiritual forces that threaten our faith is praying God's word. At Faith we seek to teach and model biblically-informed prayers.

In the next part of our lesson this week, we'll unpack this last point further and see that as we grow in our knowledge of God and his word, it can lead to a deeper and more vibrant prayer life.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *In what ways is God growing you in his word right now in your life?*

Ask another Christian, "How's your prayer life?" and there's a good chance he or she will respond with something like, "It could be better." Prayer is a struggle for many believers. There are many reasons for this. Somtimes it's our busy lives and our scattered thoughts. Maybe we feel a sense of self-relience and default to, "I can handle this." Or maybe, if we're honest, we even sometimes doubt that prayer even works. Many things can cause us to lose sight of the importance of prayer and fall out of the discipline of speaking with our Heavenly Father. What can we do about this?

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles to a healthy prayer life for many Christians is a lack of clarity as to what prayer even is. Is it a formula that must be followed every time? How long should a prayer be? Should one kneel, stand, or sit? What should one pray for? Questions like these can lead to prayer paralysis.

There's a reason why in our Five Loves we put loving God's word and prayer together. They are inseperable. Tim Keller in his book Prayer states, ***"Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through his word and his grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with him."*** (pg. 48). As we know God through his word, we respond in personal communication with God. Keller then goes on to say, ***"The power of our prayers, then, lies not primarily in our effort and striving, or in any technique, but rather in our knowledge of God."*** (pg. 49).

Where, can we start if we want to grow in our prayer lives? God's word is key. When we speak of "praying the Bible," we mean letting God's word guide us with the substance and the language of our prayers. Even Jesus' disciples needed guidance in this saying to him, ***"Lord, teach us to pray"*** (Luke 11:1). In the following exercise we'll look at the Lord's Prayer and see how it can guide us as we pray.

PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER

In Matthew chapter 6 Jesus taught his disciples to pray with these words,

> *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." - Matthew 6:9-13*

We can break down this prayer of Jesus into six main sections that will guide us as we pray.

"Our Father in heaven"

Begin by thanking God that you can personally call him your Father. If he has saved you and made you his own, he is not a distant God, detached from your life. He's adopted you into his family and you now have a close personal relationship with him. Reflect upon this as you pray in your own words.

"Hallowed be your name."

To "hallow" something means to honor it as holy. Take a moment to praise God for his greatness and holiness. He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe who is perfect and infinite in all of his ways. Ponder how amazing and wonderful it is that this almighty and all-powerful God invites you to commune with him in prayer.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

God's Kingdom is right now advancing throughout all the world. Pray for his purposes in the world and that his sovereign will would be accomplished in all things. Use this opportunity to pray for the advancement of the gospel, for missionaries, for the lost to be saved, for evils and injustices to be stopped, and for Christ's return.

"Give us this day our daily bread"

Pray for your practical felt needs and the needs of others. Things like job interviews, financial hardships, health needs, etc. are all petitions that God wants us to bring before him. Your Heavenly Father cares about your physical well-being. Don't be afraid to ask him to meet your needs, trusting him to provide in his time according to his will.

"and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

If you are a believer, your sins have been forgiven once and for all. But even as Christians we still sin and need to go to God and confess our sins and repent of them. This is not so that our sins would be atoned for again, but rather so that we may be reminded of God's pardon and grace and to have the joy of our salvation renewed. Therefore, take time in prayer to confess and repent of sin.

In addition to being forgiven, we must extend forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. Pray for God to reveal to you ways in which you need to forgive others, and ask him for the grace to help you forgive and seek reconciliation if needed.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Pray for God to guide your steps and protect you from falling into sin and temptation. Ask him to reveal to you blind spots in your life and to give you the strength and grace to resist temptation.

[For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.]

While this phrase has been traditionally prayed by Christians as part of the Lord's Prayer for centuries, it does not appear in older Bible manuscripts. But, while it is not part of Scripture, it is certainly scriptural! In fact, it echoes the launguage of 1 Chronicles 29:11 - ***"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all."*** Therefore, it is wholly appropriate to reflect upon this phrase as you pray in your own words.

OTHER EXAMPLES

Thare are many more examples from Scripture we can look to. In his book *Praying the Bible* by Don Whitney, he states,

> *"So basically what you are doing is taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God. By this means his words become the wings of your prayers." - Whitney, pgs. 33-34*

Below are a few more examples of passages that can guide you as you seek to engage with the Lord in prayer.

1. **Psalm 145** -Exultation in God, his mercy and steadfast love, praise and rejoicing in all that God has done
2. **Psalm 103** - Blessing the Lord for all he has done, thanking God for his mercies and compassion, praising God
3. **Psalms 77 & 88** - Laments and sorrow, crying out to God in times of darkness and dispair, finding hope in him alone
4. **Matthew 6:25-34** - Seeking God's comfort in times of worry, anxiety, and distress, finding peace in times of unsettledness
5. **Ephesians 1:15-23** - Praying for other believers and their growth in Christ, magnifying God for his victory in Christ
6. **Romans 8:31-39** - Rejoicing in the unshakable hope we have in Christ because of his sacrifice and great love for us
7. **Hebrews 12:1-2** - Seeking God's grace and strenth to persevere and remain focused on Christ
8. **Revelation 21:1-4** - Hoping in the glorious reign of Christ that awaits us

These are just a few examples. Ultimately, one could practically use any portion of Scripture to meaningfully reflect on its truth and then pray to God.

COMMIT TO PERSONAL WORSHIP

Our hope is that everyone who is part of our church will be engaged in a life of vibrant, personal worship. Bible reading and prayer are often referred to a "spiritual disciplines." Sometimes they come easily to us, but at other times they do not. We've probably all experienced days where we've felt unmotivated or uninterested. Cultivating the disciplines of reading the word and prayer can help us continue to grow in times like these. Some people find it helpful to remember three P's:

1. **Place** - Have a place and a time where you will determine to commune with the Lord. Make this your regular habit.

2. **Plan** - Have a plan for what you will do. Faith publishes a Bible reading plan each week. Additionally, there are numerous plans available online that will either take you through the entire Bible or through portions of it.

3. **Pray** - Seek the Sprit's help to be committed and to grow in your discipline! God promises he will give us wisdom when we ask for it (James 1:5)

CONCLUSION

At Faith, we are all learning and growing together. We are seeking, by grace, to be people who know and love God's Word and speak his Word back to him in prayer, cultivating the discipline of worship in our own lives. We also want to encourage one another. We all experience seasons of dryness, business, and tiredness, to some degree. In these times we can uphold and encourage one another.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **On a scale of 1-10 how would you rate your prayer life? Why would you give it this rating?**
- **What are some steps you could take to grow in your prayer life?**
- **What have you learned in this week's lesson that has been helpful in understanding God's word and prayer better?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **Over the next week pray through the Lord's Prayer each day in your own words.**
- **Begin to keep a prayer journal where you either write down your prayers or keep detailed notes about the things you want to pray about.**

WEEK 9 NOTES

WEEK 10 - GOSPEL CULTURE

Love One Another and Commit to Christian Community

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

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

"Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" Perhaps you've been asked that important question before. Personally believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ is necessary for one to become a Christian. No one can believe for anyone else. So, if you have that eternal hope, then why do you need anyone else? Over the past two weeks we've seen the connections between loving God, his word, and prayer. As we mentioned in Week 8, when God saves us he brings us into a new family called the church. This week we will unpack that further as we look at why we need consistent regular Christian community.

WE ARE CALLED TO COMMUNITY

Pastor and author Michael Lawrence states, *"Churches have a chance to show the world what Heaven will be like."* What does he mean by this? There are probably many who could say the opposite based upon experience. But what he's saying is, when a church functions in a healthy way, with a solid gospel doctrine & culture, their love and commitment to one another despite their differences becomes a testimony to the world that something supernatural has happened!

While salvation is a very personal experience, it leads to corporate engagement. When God saves us he makes us part of a new people–The church! We are adopted into a new family comprised of others who have had the same experience of grace in their lives. When we unite ourselves to a local church and fellowship with other believers in love, together we "show the world" that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has united us, that it *really* changes hearts.

WE ARE CREATED FOR COMMUNITY

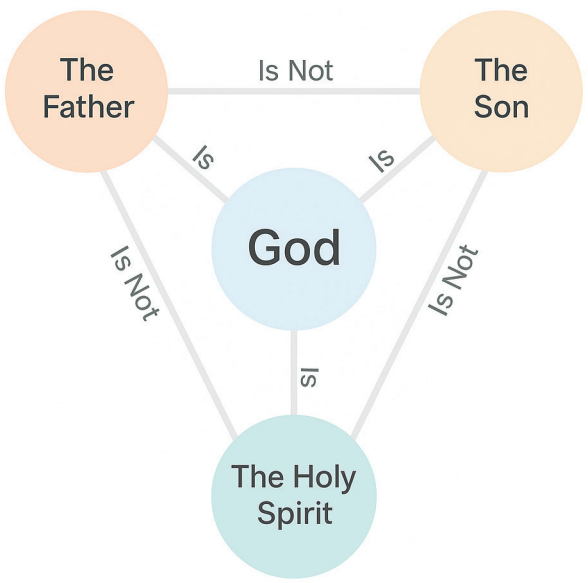
This need to be in community with other believers is woven into the fabric of our very being. In Genesis 1:26-27 God says,

> *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." - Genesis 1:26-27*

This need to be in community with other believers is woven into the fabric of our very being. In Genesis 1:26 God says ***"Let <u>US</u> make man in our image, after our likeness."*** This idea being part of a family and a loving community is rooted in the nature of God himself. We have been designed to be

 connected in relationships with others because God relates to himself within the Godhead as three persons in one God. This is an important doctrine known as the **Trinity**, and it is the foundation for understanding why we are relational beings.

One of the historic confessions called *The London Baptist Confession* of 1689 defines the Trinity in this way,



"In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him."

The relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a complex theological topic, one that we would love to discuss further with you if you have questions. But for the purposes this week's discussion, it's important to note that God in his very being is **personal** and **relational**. He is eternally in community with himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, as we are created in his image we reflect that relational aspect of his nature. We are created for community with others.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *Given what we just discussed about the Trinity, what would you say to a Christian that said, "I don't really need to go to church"?*

THE LOCAL CHURCH: A COMMUNITY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Being part of a local church can and should be a priority in the life of a believer. It should be a loving, warm, and joyful environment in which one is able to grow spiritually. But sometimes things don't go as planned. Many people have been hurt deeply in churches. You may have heard someone say something like, "I love Jesus – It's his followers I can't stand." Others may say, "The Jesus I read about in the Bible doesn't look like the Jesus I see in church." This is the sad reality of our lives in this fallen world, even among those who profess Christ. Jesus said there would be those who claim to know him but, in truth do not. They may seem for a time to be his followers, yet inwardly they have no real love for the truth (see Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; 7:15-23). Jesus describes these people as *"wolves...in sheep's cloth-*

ing." At the same time, Jesus love his church! He told Peter, ***"...I will build my CHURCH, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*** (Matt. 16:18). The Bible also says, *"...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"* (Eph. 5:25). Christ loves his bride, his family of redeemed saints for whom he shed his blood. It is upon this foundation of Christ's love that we are to love one another.

Back in Week 8 we discussed the biblical doctrines of ***justification*** and ***sanctification.*** We who have believed the good news of the Gospel and placed our faith in Christ alone for salvation are cleansed from sin and spotless in the sight of God and Jesus' righteousness is counted to us. This is the doctrine of **justification**, and it happens once when God saves a sinner (Rom. 5:1).

But, we are still not perfect in the flesh. So long as we live in this world we must continue, by the Spirit, to *"put to death the deeds of the body"* (Rom. 8:13), and be *"conformed to the image of [Christ]"* (Rom. 8:29). This is the Biblical doctrine of ***progressive sanctification***. It is process of being made more like Jesus, something that all of us who are following Christ are going through together. We're not there yet. We're all works in progress. This is why things can sometimes get messy in a local church.

THE LOCAL CHURCH: A GOSPEL COMMUNITY

So, what do we do when things get messy? To quote Ray Orlund again, *"Gospel doctrine creates a gospel culture. The doctrine of grace creates a culture of grace."* (pg. 21). The church isn't a place for people who "have it all together." On the contrary, it's a place for sinners who have been ***justified*** and are being ***sanctified***. It's a place where the saints can confess together ***"...while we were still sinners Christ died for us."*** (Rom. 5:6).

Christians in a local church can frequently have disagreements. Harsh words get said. Feelings get hurt. But when we see each other through the lens of the gospel it enables us to be patient, forgiving, and loving with one another. It enables us to say *"Christ forgave me—I forgive you."* The mark of a healthy gospel culture in the church isn't that we suddenly all get along perfectly. It's that despite our differences and our failings, we love one another because Christ first loved us. Orlund beautifully describes this kind of community:

> *"...on Sunday, we walk into a new kind of community where we discover an environment of grace in Christ alone. It is so refreshing. Sinners like us can breathe again! It's as if God simply changes everyone's topic of conversation from what's wrong with us, which is plenty, to what's right with Christ, which is endless. He replaces our negativity, finger-pointing, and self-hatred with the good news of his grace for the undeserving. Who couldn't come alive in a community that's constantly inhaling that heavenly atmosphere?" - Ortlund, pg. 91*

This is the kind of community we hope to be. One where grace abounds in all that we say and do, and we love one another as Christ loved us. We want this to be part of our gospel culture. For this reason we frequently encourage one another to "Preach the gospel to yourself every day."

70 THE LOCAL CHURCH: A ONE-ANOTHERING COMMUNITY

As we saw in Week 5 on *Church Membership*, the local church is to be a community of believers that love, serve, and care for one another. We saw this in the many "one another" imperatives in the New Testament. Let's look at these again.

- *"Love **one another**" - (Romans 13:8)*
- *"Be devoted to **one another** in brotherly love..." - (Romans 12:10)*
- *"Honor **one another** above yourselves" - (Romans 12:10)*
- *"Live in harmony with **one another**..." - (Romans 12:16)*
- *"Stop passing judgment on **one another**" - (Romans 14:13)*
- *"Accept **one another**, then, just as Christ accepted you..." - (Romans 15:7)*
- *"Serve **one another** in love" - (2 Corinthians 13:12)*
- *"Carry **each other's** burdens..." - (Galatians 6:20)*
- *"Be patient, bearing with **one another** in love" - (Ephesians 4:2)*
- *"Be kind and compassionate to **one another**..." - (Ephesians 4:32)*
- *"Speak to **one another** with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" - (Ephesians 5:19)*
- *"Submit to **one another** out of reverence for Christ" - (Ephesians 5:21)*
- *"In humility consider **others** better than yourselves" - (Philippians 2:3)*
- *"Bear with **each other**..." - (Colossians 3:13)*
- *"Admonish **one another**" - (Colossians 3:16)*
- *"Build **each other** up..." - (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*
- *"Encourage **one another** daily..." - (Hebrews 3:13)*
- *"Spur **one another** on toward love and good deeds" - (Hebrews 10:24)*

How can we fulfill these? In our own strength we cannot. But, because of Christ and his grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can!

THE LOCAL CHURCH: A DAY-BY-DAY COMMUNITY

The many "one another" imperatives of the New Testament point to something beyond a group of people coming together for an hour or two a week. They show us that there was regular fellowship among believers in the church. They were in genuine, loving, supportive, self-sacrificing community with one another. Acts 2:42-47 gives us a picture of what this looked like.

> *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." - Acts 2:42-47*

As we see in this passage the early Christians didn't limit their fellowship to just one day a week. The love they had for one another was seen "day by day."

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *What are some practical ways we as believers today can have "day-by-day" fellowship with one another?*

COMMIT TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

We encourage everyone to be connected to the broader community life at our church. As friendships and relationships deepen, there are many "day-by-day" opportunities for fellowship and service that happen. One of the ways we seek to intentionally foster this at Faith is through our **Faith Group Ministry**. Faith Groups are small groups (typically six to twelve adults) that exist to connect people relationally and further cultivate a gospel culture among our Faith family. The purpose is to love and encourage one another, hold each other accountable in our personal walk with Jesus Christ, and contribute to the work of the church through service and outreach. Faith Group meetings consist of reading, discussing, and reflecting on Scripture, prayer, and fellowship. You don't have to be a member at Faith Baptist to be in a Faith Group.

If you would like to get connected to a Faith Group, you can do this by indicating it on your Faith Card on a Sunday morning and dropping it in the offering box, visiting FaithSF.com/faith-groups, or calling the church office at 605.331.3800. Pastor Mark would love to connect with you about getting you plugged in!

CONCLUSION

Following Jesus means taking up our cross daily (Matt. 16:24). Thankfully, we don't have to do this alone! God has called us and created us for fellowship with other believers. This begins by being part of a local church body and intentionally engaging in community on a regular basis. We encourage everyone at Faith to get plugged into a Faith Group and grow in community with other believers.

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- **What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?**
- **What questions did this lesson prompt?**
- **In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?**
- **On a scale of 1-10, how important does being in community with other believers rank in your life?**
- **What are some ways you are growing in community with other believers right now?**
- **How might you connect more intentionally with other believers throughout your week?**

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- **If you're not part of a Faith Group, reach out and contact us about getting plugged in!**

WEEK 10 NOTES

LifeVar
Coden
Matthew
Kayla

WEEK 11 - GOSPEL CULTURE

Love Our Neighbors and Commit to Serve & Give

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."
Luke 10:27

"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
Matthew 22:39

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

How good would you have to be to go to Heaven? In Week 8 we looked at the first of our Five Loves and saw that God's *"...first and greatest commandment"* is *"...love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."* (Mark 12:30). We saw in that lesson that we naturally cannot fulfill this law on our own. God must first do a work of grace in our lives and give us hearts to love him. But there's a second "great commandment" that God requires of us – *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Matthew 22:39). If keeping the first great commandment is something we can only do by God's grace changing us through the power of the gospel, we cannot expect that keeping the second great commandment would be any different.

LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS

The Bible commands us to love our neighbors. Therefore, just as loving God is not optional, loving our neighbors isn't optional either. How can we do this? What motivates us to love and serve those around us? Before we answer this, we need to look at a problem that we face when we try to love our neighbors the way we should.

OUR PROBLEM

Just as we face a problem when we try to love God apart from his grace, so we face one when we try to love our neighbors in our own strength. We need God's grace to enable us to love him AND our neighbors. One prominent example of this is the well-known story of the *Good Samaritan* found in Luke 10. In today's lesson we will look at this story in detail and seek to learn important lessons from it we can apply to our lives.

> *"...a lawyer stood up to put [Jesus] to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?' And he answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.' But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance*

a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' And Jesus said to him, 'You go, and do likewise.'" - Luke 10:25-37

INTERPRETING THE PASSAGE

We might be tempted to read this parable aand think, "Let's all just try harder to love our neighbors." or to tell a church, "You go and be the Good Samaritan and God will be pleased with you." While wanting to love others more and showing love like the Good Samaritan are worthy goals, if our takeaway from this parable is, "I just need to do better," we're missing the point. Let's examine this passage.

THE LAWYER'S QUESTION

A Jewish lawyer (an expert in the Law of Moses) comes to Jesus and questions him. He does this not for sincere reasons, but in order *"to put him to the test."* Like many of the other Jewish leaders who encountered Jesus, he was seeking to entrap him and catch him saying something derogatory about the Law so he could accuse him. But the question the lawyer asks reveals his incorrect presuppositions. He asks, *"What must I DO to inherit eternal life?"* For him, eternal life was something he thought he could attain by his own works.

Jesus responds with his own question, *"What is written in the Law?"* His purpose in doing this wasn't to avoid the subject, but rather to help the lawyer see his own errors and inconsistencies. The lawyer responds with a common summary of the Ten Commandments:

1. **Love God** - This is a summary of the first four commandments found in Exodus 20:1-8. All of these commandments have to do with loving God and honoring him. Therefore, the lawyer summarizes them by saying, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,"*
2. **Love Your Neighbor** - This is a summary of the last six commandments found in Exodus 20:12-17. All of these commandments have to do with loving others. Therefore, the lawyer summarizes these by saying, *"and your neighbor as yourself."*

Jesus responds to the lawyer by saying, *"You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."* Is Jesus saying that one can keep the Law perfectly and earn his own salvation? Wouldn't such a statement contradict the very gospel of grace Jesus preached? As the story unfolds, we'll see that Jesus' answer is actually pointing the man to his need of grace.

The lawyer doesn't let Jesus' response suffice. He then seeks to justify himself by asking, *"And who is my neighbor?"* Jesus had said to him, *"do this and you will live"* not to tell him how to save himself, but to further reveal the man's true heart. The lawyer wanted Jesus to define the Law in such a way that it could be realistically kept in his own power. Jesus responds with a parable that reveals the extent of neighbor love the Law demands. The standard he sets confounds any efforts one might make to keep it perfectly.

JESUS' PARABLE

A traveler on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is robbed, beaten, stripped and left for dead. Laying there on the side of the road, he is helpless and will die if no one comes to his aid. Three people pass him by.

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *Using the space below, what do we know about each person that encountered injured man? What were their responses?*

THE PRIEST:

Who was he?_____

_____

What was his response?_____

_____

THE LEVITE:

Who was he?_____

_____

What was his response?_____

_____

THE SAMARITAN:

Who was he?_____

_____

What was his response?_____

_____

 In what would have been a shock to his Jewish audience, Jesus makes the Samaritan the compassionate, loving, caring neighbor who rescues the poor traveler. Of the three people who encounter the man, it is not those who should have understood the Law that treated the man as a neighbor, but the one who was seen as deplorable to Jews.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Why would Jesus intentionally ruffle the feathers of his audience by making someone who would have been viewed with hostility by his Jewish audience the apparent hero of the story? The point that Jesus is making is that God's standard for neighbor love is far beyond what we think it is. It is more than loving those who are easy to love. Like God's command to love him, his command to love our neighbors sets a standard that exceeds what we can do by our strength. Pastor and author Tim Keller in his book *Ministries of Mercy,* summarizes Jesus' encounter with the lawyer this way:

> *"Jesus is pointing him to the perfect righteousness the Law demanded so that he could see he is powerless to fulfill it. He was seeking to convict the law expert of sin. Jesus says in effect: 'My friend, I do take the law seriously, even more seriously than you do. Yes, you can be accepted by God if you obey the Law perfectly, BUT look at the law! See what it is really after. If you can do that, you will live. But if you see clearly, you will realize that the righteous requirement of the Law must be fulfilled in some other way." - Keller, pg. 36*

GOD'S SOLUTION

In order to love God, we need God to change us first. We need our hearts of stone to be taken out and we need to be given hearts of flesh (Ez. 36:26). This same work of grace in our lives that enables us to love God also enables us to love our neighbors. And like our love for God, it is something we are being sanctified in daily. This is why love for our neighbors must first and foremost be **gospel-driven, not guilt-driven.**

The gospel reminds us that we were once lost and helpless and God showed us mercy through his Son Jesus Christ. The gospel frees us from our self-centeredness and turns us into servants who joyfully and willingly bless others. It humbles us. It reminds us that we had nothing. We were lost, dead, at enmity with God, rebels against him, and he rescued us and showed us mercy. We remember that *"...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8). Everything we have we owe to him. Understanding his love, we are enabled by his grace to love others. Keller puts it this way,

> *"...the person who knows that he has received mercy while an undeserving enemy of God will have a heart of love for even (and especially!) the most ungrateful and difficult persons. When a Christian sees prostitutes, alcoholics, prisoners, drug addicts, unwed mothers, the homeless, the refugees, he knows that he is looking in a mirror. Perhaps the Christian spent all of his life as a respectable middle-class person. No matter. He thinks: 'Spiritually I was just like these people, though physically and socially I never was where they are now. They are outcasts. I was an outcast.'" - Keller, pg. 30*

COMMIT TO SERVE AND GIVE

As we pursue love for our neighbors at Faith, we do so in response to the mercy we have received. We seek to do that in many practical ways. Every believer has gifts and abilities that he or she has been blessed with by the Spirit. At Faith we have structured ways in which we serve our community. These include the following:

1. **Domestic Ministries Team** - This ministry seeks to meet the physical and spiritual needs in our community and beyond through service opportunities and financial support. Throughout the year they promote a number of opportunities that you can get involved with. If you're interested in learning more about this team, please let us know on your Faith Card or contact the church office.

2. **Share Ministry Team** - This is our church's benevolence ministry. Within certain guidelines, the Share ministry uses available funds to assist with basic needs for losses due to economic or personal hardship. Financial assistance is considered for regular attendees of Faith Baptist and for other residents of Lincoln or Minnehaha Counties who are experiencing financial need. In addition, the Share Ministry regularly gives to various projects and needs throughout the year.

3. **Jail Ministry** - A number of people at Faith are involved in regular ministry to inmates the Minnehaha County Jail. If you're interested in learning more about this ministry, please let us know on your Faith Card or contact the church office.

4. **Missions Ministry Team** - This ministry aims to see the gospel spread by focusing church resources in the areas of evangelism, training/equipping globally.

Loving our neighbors doesn't have to be a structured program. We encourage everyone at Faith to look for ways every day to love their neighbors. Here are a few simple ways:

1. **Grow** in compassion for your lost neighbors focusing on the gospel and letting that be your motivation.

2. **Build** relationships in your neighborhood, workplace, stores you frequent, etc.

3. **Equip** yourself to share the gospel with your neighbors, co-workers, family members, and friends.

4. **Serve** your neighbors in the course of everyday life when opportunities present themselves. This can be simple things like shoveling the snow from a driveway, pulling in trashcans, taking them a meal, etc.

80 CONCLUSION

Our hope for you at Faith is that you will be encouraged and equipped to love your neighbors in response to what Christ has done for you, showing them kindness and compassion, meeting their felt needs, building deep, meaningful relationships with them, and ultimately sharing with them the truth of the gospel. While we do have stuctured ways of doing this, we should be looking for these opportunities in our everyday lives. If there are other ways we can help you as you seek to grow in this area, please let us know!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?
- What questions did this lesson prompt?
- In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?
- What do you think it means when we say loving our neighbors should be “grace-driven” not “guilt-driven?”
- What are some of our biggest barriers to loving our neighbors as we should?
- How might we overcome those barriers?

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- Write down three people in your life that you would like to get to know better and share the gospel with.
- Begin to pray for the three people daily and ask God to give you opportunities to serve them and share with them the gospel.

WEEK 11 NOTES

WEEK 12 - GOSPEL CULTURE

Love The Gospel And Commit to Share The Gospel

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."
Matthew 24:14

RECAP & INTRODUCTION

By this point in our Faith Foundations class, if someone in our community were to ask you, "What's Faith Baptist all about?" I hope you could say "THE GOSPEL!" without hesitation. Over the last eleven weeks we've defined what the gospel is and we've seen how it is the foundation for our doctrine and culture. At this point what more can be said? What do we mean when we say we want to "Love the Gospel"? We hope to unpack that further in our lesson today.

LOVING THE GOSPEL: OUR DAILY NEED

It is through the message of the gospel that God, by his Holy Spirit, makes dead sinners alive and brings them to faith in Jesus Christ. But once we are alive, our reliance upon the gospel doesn't end. The gospel not only saves us, it **SUSTAINS** us. It informs us and transforms us in every area of a our Christian lives. How, then, do we apply the gospel in every area of our lives? Here are a few examples:

OUR CIRCUMSTANCES	THE GOSPEL APPLIED
I'm struggling with sin and temptation.	Christ paid the penalty for my sins. I am no longer under condemnation. I can confess my sins to him. He promises to help me in temptation. I can ask other believers to pray for me, hold me accountable, and stand with me in the fight.
I'm discouraged and angered by evil in the world.	Christ's victory is secure. The evils of this world cannot stop his plans. He is in sovereign control of everything. I can trust him fully and not give in to worry or fear.
My neighbor is not a Christian and is a difficult person to get along with.	Christ loved me when there was nothing lovable about me. He showed me compassion and mercy when I was a rebel against him. I can pray for those lost in sin and share the gospel with them.
My marriage is struggling.	The relationship between Christ and his church is the model for how I should love my wife (or my husband). I can seek counsel from other believers in the church to help me and my spouse grow in our marriage.

 These are just a few very simple examples, but they illustrate just how relevant the gospel is to every area of our life. A sentiment that has been stated by many pastors and theologians over the years is, "We need to preach the gospel to ourselves every day because we forget it every day." This is certainly a true statement! When we sin, when we doubt, fear, or become worried or distressed, when we're struggling with temptation or feelings of bitterness and unforgiveness, **we need the gospel!**

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *What are some other examples of ways in which we can apply the gospel to our lives each day?*

SHARING THE GOSPEL: OUR MISSION

Part of being a disciple of Jesus is believing the gospel and learning to follow and obey him, applying the gospel in our lives daily. But another indispensable part of being his disciple is making more disciples! Following Jesus means calling others to follow him also. If we have experienced God's amazing work of salvation in our lives, it should be our desire to see others experience it as well. This is why at Faith we love the gospel and are committed to sharing it both **locally** and **globally**.

We do this because Jesus commands it, and it is the mission of the church itself. After Jesus rose from the dead and before he ascended to Heaven, he said these words to his disciples,

> *"...Jesus came and said to [his disciples], 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" - Matthew 28:18-20*

This familiar passage is commonly known as the **"Great Commission,"** and it has been a rallying cry for the church over the centuries. Several important truths stand out in this passage:

1. Jesus has all **AUTHORITY** - He is in control of everything. We can be confident in him
2. We're called to make **DISCIPLES** - This is different from merely making "converts." We're making **followers** of Jesus.
3. This is to happen among the **NATIONS** - The whole world is to hear the gospel!
4. We are to **BAPTIZE** those who believe the gospel and follow Jesus.
5. We are to **TEACH** disciples to obey Christ's commands.
6. Jesus is **WITH US** as we do this!

Fulfilling the Great Commission isn't something we do in our own strength. As Jesus states in the passage, he has *"all authority"* and he is *"with"* us in the task. So, we could say that as we go out to preach the gospel in all the world, we do so under the ***preeminence*** and in the ***presence*** of Jesus Christ!

We also have another advantage as we share the gospel. In the book of Acts we see Jesus' disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost waiting for the Holy Spirit he had promised them. He tells them, ***"...you will receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*** As believers we go out into all the world, making disciples, under Jesus' **PREEMINENCE**, in his **PRESENCE**, and with his

AT YOUR TABLES BRIEFLY DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

- *How might under Jesus preeminence, presence, and power in carrying out the Great Commision help you be more bold to share with others?*

REACHING ALL NATIONS: OUR SCOPE

Where do we proclaim the gospel. The Great Commission says "all nations," and Acts 1:8 says, "... the end of the earth." What does this mean? The word "nation" comes from the Greek word *"ethnē"* from which we get the word "ethnicities. "What the Great Commission has in view when it uses this word isn't geopolitical countries, but groups of people. Reaching the nations isn't only about sending missionaries to other countries. Within other countries there can be distinct ethnic groups with their own languages and cultures. Christ's desire is that individuals from these people groups would hear the gospel, understand it, and become his disciples.

What makes this truth even more amazing is when we see that the gospel going out to all "nations" has always been a part of God's plan from the very beginning. We can trace this through the story of the Bible.

Abraham

*"...the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the **<u>families</u>** of the earth shall be blessed.'" - Genesis 12:1-3*

How would Abram (later Abraham), bless *"all the **families** of the earth"?* From Abram's line came the people of Israel from which came Jesus Christ the Messiah!

Christ

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all **<u>nations</u>**," - Matthew 28:19a*

Through Christ the promise to Abraham is going to be fulfilled. As the gospel goes out to all nations, all the "families" of the earth will be blessed."

*"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every **nation**, from all **tribes** and **peoples** and **languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" - Revelation 7:9-10*

One day the Great Commission will be fulfilled! We can read the end of the Bible and see that there will be a day in which some people from every nation on earth WILL be gathered together and worship God.

OUR CALLING

Fulfilling this task is the mission of the church today. Disciples are called to make disciples wherever they are. As a church, we have particular calling to support the work of the gospel to all nations. God may indeed call some of us to go! Regardless, we all have a role to play in this mission. We can support the ministry financially, pray for missionaries and unreached people groups, and help disciple others, etc. We do so with the confidence that this mission will not fail.

WHERE DO WE START?

For some people, sharing the gospel with people may come naturally. But for others, it can be challenging, even intimidating at times. As we're all called to be witnesses for Christ in this world, how can each of us with our own personalities and abilities be faithful?

There are many great approaches to sharing the gospel with others. There are certainly times for things outreach events, street evangelism, witnessing to people door-to-door, etc. At the same time, sharing the gospel with others doesn't have to be a program or be overly complicated. One of the simplest approaches goes back to our lesson from last week. Look for opportunities among your neighbors in the course of your every day life. A simple approach to use is "ABCDE."

1. **Associate** - Get to know non-Christians. This could be your neighbors, co-workers, people at businesses you frequent, etc. Look for opportunities in your everyday life.
2. **Bridge** - Look for opportunities to connect with them. Build relationships with them. Explore shared hobbies and interests. Be a sincere friend!
3. **Consider** - As you get to know them, try to understand where they're coming from. Do they have any religious background at all? Have they been hurt? How do they view the world? Pray for them!
4. **Demonstrate** - Listen to them. Have respectful discussions with them. Try to answer their questions and address objections they might have.

5. **Evangelize** - Share they gospel in a way that is compelling and understandable to them. Sometimes this might happen quickly in the relationship. At other times it may take longer and require laying a foundation for understanding. Pray for wisdom and grace as you do this!

CONCLUSION

We hope you truly understand, believe in, and love the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you do, we hope you will considering joining our Faith family to be part of this great mission to share this gospel to the ends of the earth, trusting that Jesus is in charge, he is with us, he has empowered us, and the mission cannot fail!

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Here are some questions you can reflect on personally or with a spouse or friend:

- What are some things that stood out to you about this lesson?
- What questions did this lesson prompt?
- In what ways were you encouraged and challenged?
- Have you ever considered a call to cross-cultural missions?
- If you haven't been called to cross-cultural missions, in what ways are you involved in supporting mission work to the nations?

HOMEWORK (OPTIONAL)

- Take a picture of the missions board in the Worship Center. Begin praying daily for a missionary we support at Faith.
- Consider financially supporting a missionary personally or as a family. This doesn't have to be a large sum of money, but can demonstrate sacrifice and commitment to global missions.

WEEK 12 NOTES

CHR

WEEK 13 - GOSPEL VISION

Q&A Forum with the Pastors/Elders

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

FINAL THOUGHTS

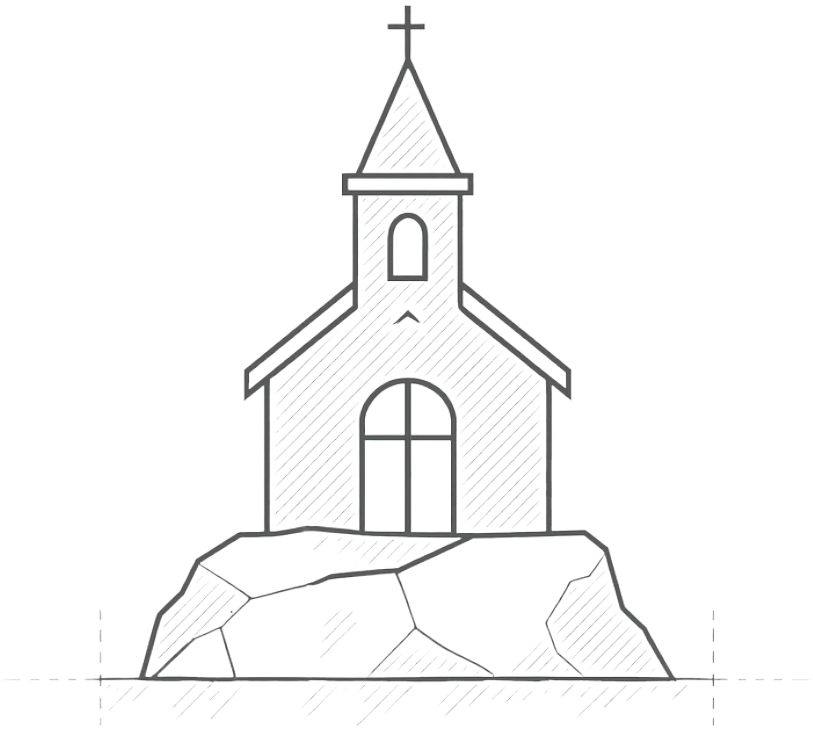
We hope your time in Faith Foundations has been fruitful and that you've gained a deeper understanding of our church. More than anything, we pray one truth has stood out clearly–**We love the gospel!** We want what we believe to be firmly rooted in gospel doctrine, and we want what we do and how we live to reflect a gospel-shaped culture.

In our final week of Faith Foundations, you'll have the opportunity to hear directly from our pastors and elders as we respond to questions submitted throughout the semester. As always, if you'd like to meet and talk through any matters personally, we'd be glad to connect. You can reach out to any of us directly or contact the church office at 605.331.3800 to set up a time.

If there is one thing we would want you to carry with you from this class, it is a clear understanding of the gospel. So as we close, we'll once again share the glorious good news we studied earlier this semester.

> *The Eternal God, who is perfect, righteous, holy, and just, created us for his own glory, and we are accountable to him to perfectly keep all of his commandments and love him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.*
>
> *We have all sinned against God, broken his commandments, and we continuously fall short of his glory. We have all rebelled against him and rejected his authority over us. Because of this, we justly deserve death and eternal judgement.*
>
> *God being gracious and merciful, has provided the Way for sinners like us to be reconciled to himself. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ (God in the flesh) to save fallen sinners. Jesus lived a sinless life and died on the cross, taking the punishment for sinners. On the third day he rose from the grave, defeating sin, and death, and hell for all who believe. He ascended to Heaven where he is now seated at God the Father's right hand.*
>
> *All who come to Jesus Christ by faith alone, repenting of their sins and believing in his perfect sacrifice, trusting him and no one else for salvation, are justified before God, adopted into his family, and are no longer under judgment for their sins. Jesus has promised to return one day and reign forever in the fullness of his kingdom with all those who have believed in Him.*

APPENDIX



Faith

Faith Baptist Fellowship

BYLAWS

Adopted: January 26, 2025

OUR MISSION

"To honor God by making more disciples for Jesus Christ and equipping them for growth and service."

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ARTICLE 1 - NAME AND ORGANIZATION

1. **NAME**

   The name of this organization shall be “FAITH BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP”.

2. **ORGANIZATION**

   The organization took place on the 9th day of August, 1979.

3. **INCORPORATION**

   This organization was incorporated under and pursuant to the provisions of the South Dakota Nonprofit Corporation Act on the 19th day of December, 1979. The Church shall be authorized to exercise general powers granted to such nonprofit corporations by the South Dakota Nonprofit Corporation Act, as amended. The Elder Council shall be deemed to be the Board of Directors for the Church as by South Dakota Law.

4. **AFFILIATION**

   This Church shall maintain affiliation with the Baptist General Conference, conducting affairs as Converge Worldwide, and its district affiliate, Heartland Baptist District, conducting affairs as Converge Heartland.

ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE

1. **THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH**

   a. To preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances of the New Testament, minister to the spiritual needs of its members and all people everywhere, to train Christian workers for the Lord’s work, and further the evangelization of the world by making disciples for Jesus Christ and equipping them for growth and service.

   b. To extend the ministry of this church through assisting in the establishment of new churches within our ministry area.

   c. To take, secure, hold, or acquire, by gift, purchase, legacy, or otherwise, real and personal property, whenever it may deem the same proper, necessary, and expedient in the work and purpose for which this body was organized and incorporated; and to hold, lease, encumber, give, exchange, or sell and transfer and dispose of the same, in part or in whole when it deems such action expedient, necessary, or beneficial in promoting and advancing the work and purposes for

which this corporation is formed; and to do or accomplish such acts as this body shall deem necessary or incidental thereto, all such acts to conform to the laws of this State.

d. No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, Elders, Other Officers, or private persons, except that the corporation may pay for services rendered and make payment and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article 2 hereof.

ARTICLE 3 - PREAMBLE

Trusting in the Lord Jesus for our salvation while looking to the Holy Bible as our sole and perfect rule of faith and practice, and continuing in the rich heritage of the Baptist tradition, we, therefore, voluntarily band ourselves together as a body of baptized believers in Jesus Christ for a more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the eternal Word of God, in the adoption and establishment of these Bylaws of our government, the affirmation of faith as a guide to our doctrine, and the membership covenant as a guide for living.

ARTICLE 4 - OUR AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

1. **THE WORD OF GOD**

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. *(John 17:7; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21)*

2. **THE TRINITY**

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons; that these are equal in every divine perfection; and that they execute distinct, but harmonious, offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. *(Matthew 28:19; John 1:1-4; 1 John 5:7)*

3. **GOD THE FATHER**

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of each

person; that He hears and answers prayer; and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. *(John 3:16-17; John 4:24; John 17:5)*

4. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary atoning death on the cross, bodily resurrection from the grave, ascension into Heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth. *(Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:2-3; 1 John 1:7)*

5. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify, and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide. *(John 14:26; John 16:7-15; Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:13-14)*

6. HUMANITY

We believe God created humankind immutably as male and female to reflect and bear His image. As such, human beings of every ethnicity, age, ability, as well as the pre-born, deserve dignity, protection, honor, respect, and Christian love. Because of Adam and Eve's free choice to sin, God's image in all humankind has become distorted, and relationship with God has become disrupted. *(Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:16-19; Romans 3:23)*

7. REGENERATION

We believe that all people are sinners by nature and by choice, and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. *(John 1:12-13; John 3:3; John 3:16-17; Acts 20:21; Ephesians 2:1-9; Titus 3:5)*

8. THE CHURCH

We believe in the universal church; a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head, and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world. *(Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 2:38-41; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 5:25-27)*

9. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the wellbeing of others; that their conduct should be blameless before the world; that they should be faithful stewards of their possessions; and that they should seek to realize for themselves and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. *(2 Corinthians 9:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:14-16; Colossians 3:17-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)*

10. THE ORDINANCES

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. *(Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32)*

11. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

We believe that every human being has direct relations with God and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by an ecclesiastical or political authority; that, therefore, church and state must be kept separate as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

12. CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

We believe that Christian marriage is a sacred institution ordained by God for the wellbeing and propagation of humankind. It is a covenant representing the spiritual and physical union into which one man and one woman may enter for the glory of God, symbolizing the relationship of Christ to His church. As the sign of this covenant, sexual activity is reserved exclusively for the marriage relationship. According to the scriptural ideal, marriage requires sacrificial love and faithfulness to each other for life. *(Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-5; Ephesians 5:32-33)*

13. CHURCH COOPERATION

We believe that the local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in an association of churches. Such an organization, whether it is Converge Worldwide, or one of its regional districts, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in the association is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with interdenominational fellowships on a voluntary, independent basis.

14. THE LAST THINGS

We believe in the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His Kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal joy of righteousness, and the endless suffering of the wicked. *(Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:1-15)*

ARTICLE 5 - MEMBERSHIP

1. QUALIFICATION

Any person confessing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, while giving evidence of regeneration and being in agreement with the faith and practice held by this church, may be a candidate for membership.

2. ADMISSION

The candidate for membership shall:

a. Be at least sixteen (16) years of age;

b. Have been baptized before the assembled church, or declare to the satisfaction of the Elder Council that they have been baptized by immersion as a believer;

c. Express their personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ as part of an interview with Elder Council members, or other method approved by the Elder Council; and

d. Be recommended by the Elder Council for admission to membership into the church, voted on by its members at any worship service or business meeting, and welcomed by the hand of fellowship extended by an Elder or Pastor.

3. OUR MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

With great delight in the grace of God, who has called us out of darkness and into the light of His Son, Jesus Christ, as God's holy people:

- Having been born again to a living hope through the Gospel;
- Having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, upon profession of our faith; and
- Having found a home with the faith, mission, vision, ordinances, doctrine, and discipleship of this church,

We do now affirm our covenant together.

(John 3:3; John 3:16; Acts 2:38; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1; 1 Peter 2:9-10)

Humbly seeking God's help by the power of the Holy Spirit, we will protect the testimony and unity of this church by acting in love toward one another, refusing to gossip or slander one another, and graciously following those who lead us. *(Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:29; Ephesians 5:18; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 1:22)*

Our sincere desire is to contribute to the health and vitality of our church by praying regularly for its growth, warmly inviting others to attend, and joyfully welcoming all who visit. We will apply the truth of the Gospel in our homes, teaching our children to love the Gospel, God's Word, and prayer. *(Luke 14:23; Romans 15:7; Colossians 4:2; 2 Timothy 1:5; James 2:1-4)*

We will serve this body in the strength which God supplies, discovering and using our spiritual gifts and talents, actively sharing the gospel, entering into the discipleship and growth of others, and cultivating the heart of a servant. We will joyfully sit under the preaching and teaching of God's Word, desiring by it to grow stronger, deeper, and more devoted in our faith and service to Christ. *(1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11)*

With God as our witness, we will endeavor to faithfully attend worship services, live a life pleasing to our Father in Heaven, humbly confess when we have failed to do so and receive His discipline. We will lovingly care for others in their spiritual journey and share the Christian life with them. As God provides, we will happily give our resources so that the needs of this church and its wider kingdom ministry are met. Together, we long to see our city, region, nation, and world reached with the gospel, and confident of God's promises, we will labor side-by-side until this great work of grace is accomplished. *(Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 4:14-20; Hebrews 10:24-25; Hebrews 12:7-11)*

To God be the glory, Amen.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

a. Every able member of the church is expected to personally attend its meetings, unless providentially hindered, and to work for its growth, to fittingly represent their Lord and church in the community, and to contribute regularly and according to his/her ability.

b. Members shall strive, with God's help, to keep their church obligations. They shall hold their Pastors and Elders in esteem and pray for them, as well as Other Officers of the church, and work with them in carrying out the ministry of the church. They shall endeavor to preserve the unity of the church, and if at any time they find themselves opposed to the doctrine of this church, they shall not seek to disrupt its fellowship, but communicate directly with the Elders to express their concerns.

c. All members in good standing shall have equal rights, except that those under age eighteen (18) shall be ineligible to vote on corporate matters. Members of this church have no property rights upon termination of membership and shall be entitled to no interest in the assets.

d. Members that are qualified to vote will have the authority and opportunity to perform the following in accordance with the appropriate Bylaws articles:

1) Vote on matters of church membership;
2) Vote on the selection of Officers; vote on Financial Review and Nominating Committee members;
3) Vote on the Pastoral Selection Committee and the call and terms for a Pastor;
4) Submit names of possible nominees for open positions to Elders or Nominating Committee members prior to elections;
5) Propose action for the removal of an Elder or dismissal of a Pastor;
6) Request special business meetings;
7) Vote on the annual budget and any expenditure thereafter greater than three percent (3%) of the budget and not originally provided for in the budget;
8) Vote on any conveyances, sale, mortgage, encumbrance, or easement of church real estate; and
9) Vote on changes to these Bylaws.

5. **REMOVAL**

a. Any member desiring to sever membership shall be removed upon request. Such removal, if so requested, may be accomplished by a transfer letter to another like-minded church.

b. Any member who joins another church will be removed from membership in this church.

c. Active membership status of all members shall be reviewed annually. The Elder Council will recommend removal of any member deemed to be inactive to the church.

d. Removal of membership in all cases will be effective upon a majority vote at any business meeting, with the exception of removal for deceased members. Deceased members will be removed from membership without congregational approval.

6. **DISMISSAL FOR DISCIPLINE**

a. Members who persist in living contrary to biblical truth and our membership covenant may be recommended by the Elder Council for dismissal from membership. The Elder Council shall maintain a policy outlining a disciplinary procedure. The Elder Council shall seek to meet with all such persons in order to restore them to fellowship, but failing to see satisfactory evidence of repentance and reformation, the Elder Council shall report actions taken and recommend dismissal to the church. Dismissal of any member for discipline will become effective upon a majority vote at any business meeting.

b. In all cases of grievances between members, the offenders shall be dealt with in accordance with the scripture set forth in Matthew 18:15-20. No public charge shall be made until such reconciliation has been attempted. If reconciliation is not successful, formal charges shall be written and submitted to the Elder Council for further action. Such written charges shall be confidential, but available for private inspection by members, who shall agree to keep confidential such charges.

ARTICLE 6 - GOVERNMENT

The government of this church is vested in the body of members who compose it. Thus, the final authority for decisions shall be the congregation to whom the Elder Council and Pastoral Staff are responsible.

ARTICLE 7 - ELDERS AND ELDER COUNCIL

1. QUALIFICATIONS

Each Elder shall:

a. Meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7;

b. Be a man who has been a Christian for at least five (5) years;

c. Be a church member of this church for at least two (2) years;

   1) Senior and Associate Pastors shall be excluded from the two-year membership requirement.

d. Have attained the age of twenty-five (25) years;

e. Agree with the faith and practice of this church.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Elder Council shall:

a. Have responsibility for the teaching, shepherding, and oversight of the church;

b. Elect its Chairman from the Non-Vocational Elders. He shall serve as the Moderator of the church;

c. Elect its Vice-Chairman from the Non-Vocational Elders. He shall serve as the Vice-Moderator of the church;

d. Bring any conveyances, sale, mortgage, encumbrance, or easement of the church real estate to the church for approval by majority vote at a business meeting. The Elder Council shall also bring expenditures to the church that are greater than three percent (3%) of the annual budget and not originally provided for in the budget. The expenditures must be approved by a majority vote at a business meeting, except in the case of emergencies;

e. Delegate and request elements of their responsibilities to be performed through ministry groups and ministry teams to ensure alignment and the proper focus on the church's overall disciple-making process in support of the mission and vision statements;

f. Be responsible for the worship services of the church in the absence of the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors.

3. COMPOSITION

a. The Elder Council shall be made up of Vocational Elders and Non-Vocational Elders.

b. Nine (9) Elders will typically serve and as the membership of the church increases or decreases, their numbers may increase or decrease as necessary. The Elder Council will determine the number of Elders needed, but the number will never be less than three (3) Elders.

c. At least a 2:1 ratio of Non-Vocational to Vocational Elders will be maintained. In the situation where the 2:1 ratio is not being met due to insufficient Non-Vocational Elders, the Associate Pastor last hired shall not vote.

4. VOCATIONAL ELDERS

a. The Vocational Elder designation is for the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastors.

b. Upon the church's call, Vocational Elders shall be automatically added to the Elder Council and required to attend Elder Council meetings.

c. Vocational Elders shall be removed from the Elder Council upon termination of employment or resignation.

d. Vocational Elders shall be excused from discussion and decisions regarding their salaries or other matters as deemed appropriate by a majority vote of Non-Vocational Elders.

5. NON-VOCATIONAL ELDERS

a. The Non-Vocational Elder designation is for Elders who are not employed as a Pastor and meet the requirements as defined in the Elder and Elder Qualifications section.

b. Non-Vocational Elders shall be excused from discussion and decisions where conflicts of interest exist as deemed appropriate by a majority vote of the other Elders.

6. TERMS

a. Vocational Elders shall serve for an indeterminate term on the Elder Council.

b. Non-Vocational Elders:

1) Candidates will be identified by the Elder Council in consultation with the Nominating Committee and will be subject to a selection and interview process deemed appropriate by the Elder Council.

2) Shall serve four (4) year terms and take office the day after the annual business meeting. Elder terms will be staggered as much as possible to help maintain continuity for the Elder Council. After one (1) year off, an Elder may serve again.

3) Due to resignation, death, or removal of an Elder, a replacement may fulfill the term remaining for that Elder. If an Elder serves in that manner and performs two (2) years or less, he would be eligible to move into a new four (4) year term without a year off.

c. Due to life and/or ministry circumstances, an Elder may resign his position or request a temporary leave from the Elder Council. Leave shall be granted, subject to the approval of the majority vote of the Elder Council.

7. REMOVAL OF AN ELDER

a. An Elder shall be presumed to have vacated his office if he ceases to be an active church member.

b. An Elder may also be removed from office for failure to attend meetings of the Elder Council without reasonable cause or for conduct impairing his efficiency.

c. If removal is deemed advisable by vote of three-fourths (3/4) of the other Elders, the Elder Council shall recommend removal to the church. A majority ballot vote at a business meeting can then remove the Elder from office.

d. Action to remove an Elder from office may be initiated by the church by providing a written request signed by twenty percent (20%) of the active membership to the Elder Council.

1) The reason for removal must be clearly documented in the written request.

2) The Elder Council will review the request and come to a final decision regarding the request within sixty (60) days.

3) Information about the decision and any associated actions will be presented by the Elder Council to the church at the next business meeting.

ARTICLE 8 - PASTORAL STAFF

1. QUALIFICATIONS

The qualifications of Pastors are set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Pastors shall be in agreement with the faith and practice of this church, and sympathetic and cooperative with Converge Worldwide and its district affiliate, Converge Heartland.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Senior Pastor shall:

1) Be responsible to the Elder Council for ministries as per their job description.

2) Preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, exercise concern for the spiritual needs of the church, and develop its strength for the best possible service.

3) Be the Chief Administrative Officer of the church, an Elder on the Elder Council, an ex-officio non-voting member of all ministry groups and teams of the church, and church member upon employment by the church.

b. Associate Pastors shall:

1) Be responsible to the Senior Pastor and Elder Council for ministries as per their job description.

2) Assist the Senior Pastor in the ministries of preaching, administering of ordinances, and in the organization and administration of the church.

3) Be an Elder on the Elder Council and church member upon employment by the church.

3. TERMS

Senior and Associate Pastors shall serve for an indeterminate term.

4. ESTABLISHING A PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

a. Selection and Duties of the Pastoral Search Committee:

When it is necessary to call a Pastor, a representative Pastoral Search Committee consisting of at least five (5) members, including one (1) or more Elder Council members, shall be appointed by the Elder Council and ratified by a majority vote at a business meeting of the church. This Committee shall seek a suitable candidate for Pastor and shall arrange for the church to become acquainted with him. In seeking a suitable candidate, the Committee shall consult the leaders of Converge Worldwide and its district affiliate, Converge Heartland, and also take suggestions from the members of the church. It shall investigate the merits of a candidate, giving consideration to his personal character, education, ministerial record, and abilities. The Committee will recommend to the Elder Council its candidate for Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor for their approval.

b. Extension of the call:

The recommendations of the Elder Council concerning (a) the call of a Pastor, and (b) the terms of such call shall be presented to the church at a specially called business meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been communicated at the worship services for two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the day of the meeting. A three-fourths (3/4) majority ballot vote shall be necessary to extend a call to anyone under consideration. A majority ballot vote is required to approve the terms of the call. Only one (1) candidate shall be presented to the church at one (1) time. When the call has been approved by the church, it shall be sent to the candidate by the church clerk. The candidate's written acceptance of the call shall establish the pastoral relationship as of the date agreed upon by the church and the candidate.

c. Working Arrangements with the Pastor:

The Pastor's salary and other benefits (i.e., housing, utilities, insurance, travel, retirement, etc.), as well as provisions for his vacation and participation in opportunities for service or professional growth, shall be fixed at the time of the call and shall be reviewed by the Elder Council at least yearly when preparing the annual budget.

5. DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

a. Resignation:

When a Pastor resigns, he will provide a letter of resignation to the Elder Council. The Elder Council shall announce the resignation to the church, provide the effective date of resignation, and make recommendation to the church regarding the financial terms for dissolution of the Pastoral relationship at a business meeting. The date of dissolution shall be no more than sixty (60) days or less than thirty (30) days after the effective date of the acceptance of the resignation by the church, unless recommended differently by the Elder Council. If, in the judgment of the Elder Council, the continuance of the Pastor's ministry shall be undesirable, the Elder Council shall recommend to the church that the relationship be discontinued immediately, but the salary shall be continued for a minimum of thirty (30) days.

b. Dismissal:

1) Any proposal to dismiss a Pastor shall be referred to the Elder Council for consideration and counsel with the Pastor, if necessary, in an attempt to correct the grievance. If the grievance cannot be corrected, the church may

dissolve the Pastoral relationship upon recommendation from the Elder Council and carried by a majority ballot vote at a special business meeting.

2) The Elder Council shall be required to present to the church any written request for the dismissal of a Pastor when signed by twenty percent (20%) of the qualified voting membership of the church. Such action shall be taken at a special business meeting and a majority ballot vote shall be necessary to carry the motion for dismissal. In the event such petition fails to carry the majority vote, any Elder Council members signing such a petition shall automatically relinquish their office.

ARTICLE 9 - OTHER OFFICERS

All following Officers shall be members of the church and be in agreement with the faith and practice of this church. They will serve under the direction of the Elder Council and shall be responsible to the Elder Council, as well as to the church, and shall render reports as either may direct.

1. TREASURER

The Treasurer shall oversee an accurate account of all monies deposited in the bank by the Financial Secretary or assistant(s) and shall oversee payments of all obligations incurred by the church, by check drawn or debit on such account, as provided by the church budget or upon approval by the church or Elder Council.

2. FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND/OR ASSISTANT(S)

The Financial Secretary and/or assistants shall oversee an accurate account of all monies received and make deposits into a bank as directed by the Elder Council. The Financial Secretary shall send statements of account to each donor.

3. CLERK

The Clerk shall keep a record of proceedings of the church, take charge of all records, issue letters of transfer or dismissal as directed by the church or Elder Council, and keep a register of the names of all members of the church. The Clerk shall make a report to the membership of the preceding year at the annual business meeting and shall deliver all documents and records kept to their successor.

4. **TERMS**

a. All Other Officers shall serve for the term of one (1) year beginning the day after the annual business meeting and can continue with one (1) year renewals upon review of the Nominating Committee and Elder Council.

b. Resignation of any Officer shall be in writing to the Elder Council and will be effective on the date specified.

ARTICLE 10 - COMMITTEES

1. **FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

A Financial Review Committee of three (3) members will review the books of the Financial Secretary and of the Treasurer once a year and at such other times as the Elder Council may request. They will submit a written report to the Elder Council at the completion of their annual review or any other requested review.

2. **NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

a. The Nominating Committee shall nominate the Treasurer, Financial Secretary/Assistant Financial Secretaries, Clerk, Financial Review Committee members, at-large Nominating Committee members, and other positions as identified by the Elder Council. The Elder Council will also be in consultation with the Nominating Committee regarding Elder candidates.

b. This Committee will consist of five (5) members. The Senior Pastor, one (1) Elder identified by the Elder Council, and three (3) at-large members to be elected by the church.

3. **TERMS**

a. Financial Review and at-large Nominating Committee members shall serve three (3) year terms, with one-third (1/3) of each Committee to begin service the day after the annual business meeting.

b. Members of the Financial Review and Nominating Committees can serve one (1) term and be eligible for renomination to the same committee after one (1) year off.

ARTICLE 11 - MINISTRY GROUPS AND TEAMS

The church and Elder Council may carry out their work through ministry groups and ministry teams.

1. **QUALIFICATIONS**
   a. Church membership is required to serve as a ministry group leader or ministry team leader. These leaders will be selected, appointed, and serve at the discretion of the Elder Council.
   b. Church membership is preferable, but not required for ministry team members.

2. **RESPONSIBILITIES**
   a. Ministry groups will be defined by the Elder Council in a manner to fulfill the church's mission and vision statements.
   b. The Elder Council will present their plan for ministry groups and ministry teams to the church at a business meeting at least once annually.

ARTICLE 12 - OTHER EMPLOYEES

1. **EMPLOYMENT AND DUTIES**
   a. Any other church employee may be called or dismissed by the Elder Council.
   b. Employees shall be under the general supervision of the Elder Council, but the Elder Council may have the employee report to someone other than an Elder.
   c. The Elder Council shall present to each employee a written description of his or her duties and responsibilities.

2. **WORKING ARRANGEMENTS**
   a. Salaries/wages, other benefits, and vacations shall be fixed at the time of employment, presented to the employee in writing, and may be changed upon recommendation of the Elder Council.
   b. Compensation arrangements shall be reviewed by the Elder Council at least yearly when preparing the annual budget.

ARTICLE 13 - MEETINGS

1. **WORSHIP**
   a. The church shall meet every Sunday for worship and may schedule other meetings as deemed necessary.
   b. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once every two (2) months. The first Sunday of each month shall be the normal time of observance.

2. **BUSINESS MEETINGS**
   a. Any ordinary matter of business requiring action by the church may be presented and acted upon at any scheduled meeting of the congregation.
   b. A quorum of at least twenty percent 20% of the qualified voting membership must be in attendance to establish a business meeting.
   c. Special business meetings of the church may be held at any time by order of the Elder Council, the Senior Pastor, or upon written request of twenty percent (20%) of the qualified voting membership.
      1) Such requests shall be submitted to the Elder Council.
      2) The time and place of the meeting and the nature of the business to be acted upon shall be communicated at the worship services for two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the day of the meeting.
   d. The annual business meeting shall be held following the second Sunday in January and on or before the first Sunday in February.
   e. Quarterly business meetings shall be held in the months of April, July, and October.
   f. The time and place of quarterly and annual business meetings will be communicated at the worship services for two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the day of the meeting.

ARTICLE 14 - ELECTIONS

1. **TIME**

   The selection of Officers and Committee positions requiring either church ratification or election shall be held as part of a business meeting. Annual elections will be conducted at the October business meeting whenever possible.

2. **PROCEDURE**

a. Pastors will be called by the church per Article 8, section 4, Establishing a Pastoral Relationship.

b. Candidate names for the following Officer positions will be placed on a ballot to seek ratification for approval by a majority vote to serve in those positions:

1) Elders

2) Treasurer

3) Financial Secretary and/or Assistants

4) Clerk

c. Candidate names for the Financial Review Committee will be placed on a ballot to seek ratification for approval by a majority vote to serve on the Committee.

d. Candidate names for the at-large Nominating Committee positions will be placed on a ballot for election by a majority vote to serve on the Committee. Election of an at-large Nominating Committee member shall be conducted between a minimum of two church members.

e. Prior to elections, members are encouraged to submit names of possible nominees to Elders or Nominating Committee members for their consideration.

3. **VACANCIES**

Vacancies occurring during the year, with the exception of Pastor and Elder positions, may be filled by the Elder Council until the next election.

4. **QUALIFICATION OF VOTERS**

A member must be of legal age (18) to be qualified to vote in an election.

ARTICLE 15 – FINANCES

1. **PROCEDURE**

a. Finances necessary for supporting the church and its mission shall be obtained through voluntary tithes, gifts, and offerings.

b. Additional appeals for funds, budgeted or non-budgeted, may be made as deemed advisable by the Elder Council.

c. Church approved programs will be financed out of the treasury of the church.

d. The annual budget will be approved by a majority vote and all fund designations shall be honored, unless changed by congregational approval.

ARTICLE 16 - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Revised shall be followed by the church in all cases to which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the Bylaws or the special rules of order of this church.

ARTICLE 17 - DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

1. **DIVISION**

   a. In case of organic division of the church membership, the church property shall belong to those members who abide by these Bylaws.

   b. Should any controversy arise as to who is abiding by these Bylaws, the question shall be submitted to the overseers of the Heartland Baptist District, conducting affairs as Converge Heartland, and their decision shall be final.

2. **DISSOLUTION**

   Upon the dissolution of the corporation, the Elder Council shall, after paying and making provisions for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of all of the assets of the corporation to the Heartland Baptist District, conducting affairs as Converge Heartland, or if such organization is not in existence at the time of such dissolution, to such other organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and religious purposes, as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) as the Elder Council shall determine.

ARTICLE 18 – AMENDMENTS

1. **PROCEDURE**
   a. Amendments to these Bylaws must first be presented for discussion and consideration of adoption by majority vote at a quarterly or special business meeting of the church held at least three months prior to an annual meeting.
   b. Amendments must be adopted at an annual meeting of the church at which a quorum of members is present and approved by a two–thirds (2/3) majority ballot vote.

Updated 8/18/2025

Faith Baptist Fellowship Ministry Structure

Making & Equipping Disciples for Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ

Elders/Congregation

Senior Pastor

First Steps

Ministries centered on initial engagement and fellowship with both one another and newcomers

Oversight

Pastor Thomas

David Cotten
Ryan Decker

Communications

Podcast
Social Media
Website/App

Connecting

Faith Foundations
Welcome Ministry
- Java Team
- Welcome Center

Worship Logistics

Communion
Decorating

Worship Ministries

Choir
Musicians
Tech (Audio/Visual)

Walking

Ministries centered on discipleship of the body of Christ

Oversight

Pastor Mark

Max Masters
Mike Stroh

College & Young Adults

Faith Groups

Faith University

Sunday
Wednesday Night

Men's Ministry

PrimeTime

Resources/Library

Women's Ministry

Family Ministry

Angela Myers

Children's Discipleship

Nursery
Children's Worship
Sunday School
Wednesday Night

Youth Discipleship

Sunday School
Wednesday Night
Camps

Running

Ministries centered on outreach, evangelism, and missions

Oversight

Pastor Mike

Leigh Tange
Matt Thompson

Counseling

Domestic Ministries

(Formerly Kingdom Opportunites)

Prison/Jail Ministry

International Missions

Share Team

Short Term Missions

Care

Greg Friesner

Care Ministry
Grief
Prayer Ministry
Visitation

Operations

Serving the practical needs of the church

Oversight

Heidi Hawkins

Leigh Tange
David Cotten

Custodians

Facility Use

Finance Team

Property Mgmt

Staff

Pastor Mike

Office Staff
Interns/Residents

PASTORS/ELDERS

MIKE JOHNSON
Pastor of Preaching & Vision

THOMAS SLAWSON
Pastor of Worship & First Steps

MARK HECHT
Pastor of Discipleship

DAVID COTTEN
Elder

RYAN DECKER
Elder

MAX MASTERS
Elder

MIKE STROH
Elder

LEIGH TANGE
Elder Council Chair

MATT THOMPSON
Elder Council Vice Chair

MINISTRY STAFF

GREG FRIESNER
Director of Care

NATHAN FRIEZ
Tech/AV Assistant

HEIDI HAWKINS
Director of Operations

CARMEN HECHT
Office Ministry Assistant

AARON MYERS
Technical Director

ANGELA MYERS
Director of Family Ministries

ELIJAH MYERS
Graphics & Social Media Coordinator

LINDA SCHILLING
Office Manager

JOSH STIBRAL
Pastoral Resident

Faith Communication Covenant

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Ephesians 4:29)

1. **Before I talk to anyone about any issue I will speak to the Lord first about the issue.**
   "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

2. **I won't send or pay attention to unsigned letters or notes.** Information should always travel with a person's name so it can be cleared up if necessary. I won't deal with conflict via email.
   "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." (Proverbs 12:18)

3. **I will not manipulate; I will not be manipulated.**
   "From the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way." (James 3:10)

4. **When in doubt about an issue, I will ask the appropriate people to achieve clarity.**
   "The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge." (Proverbs 18:15)

5. **If it's about you and confidential, I won't tell** (unless someone is harming himself or someone else). If it is confidential about someone else see #9 below.
   "He who conceals a transgression seeks love, But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends." (Proverbs 17:9)

6. **If I have a problem with another person, I will go to that person privately.**
   "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." (Matthew 18:15)

7. **If individuals have a problem with me, I want them to come to me privately and I will be open when they come.**
   "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." (Matthew 18:15)

8. **If I discover that someone has a problem with me I need to go to them.**
   "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

9. **If someone has a problem with me, and goes to you, send the person to me. (I'll do the same for you.)**
    a. **If someone hesitates to go, say, "Let's go together." (I'll do the same for you.)**

    "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

10. **Be careful about how you interpret me—I'd rather help you interpret me. In turn, I will be careful about how I interpret you.**

    To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, "The one who desires life, to love and see good days, Must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. "He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. "For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:8-12)

Elder Council Policy on Church Discipline

Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul taught clearly that efforts should be made to correct those professing faith in Christ who have begun to live in sin or error. Christ's basic approach, found in Matthew 18:15-17, is a simple and clear starting point. I Corinthians 5 is another important passage on the necessity of church discipline. As the elders of Faith Baptist Fellowship, it is our earnest desire to shepherd our flock with biblical faithfulness, humility, and prayer; and to protect the church from harm. Thus, the result is this Elder Council policy, prepared in accordance with Scripture and our church's governing documents.

However, first we must note that while taking steps to maintain the witness, unity, doctrine, reputation and purity of the church, the church must always keep in mind its goals and focus in discipline:

- Reconciliation where there is brokenness,
- Righteousness where there is impurity, and
- Restoration of fellowship to the erring believer,
- All for the glory of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

May we never seek to humiliate or embarrass a person in our church family, but always seek their repentance and joyful restoration to the church and fellow believers. May we never seek our own personal interests, but always the interests of the body and the honor of Christ and his church (Philippians 2:3-4). May disciplinary steps always be pursued with gentleness, love, and the hope of true Christian fellowship (Galatians 6:1-2; I John 1:7-10; 2 Corinthians 2:6-7). May disciplinary steps be received with humility, earnest self-reflection, and eagerness to repent and be restored by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 13:17).

First Step

As a first step, any believer in our fellowship, when they become aware of a brother or sister pursuing a life of disobedience and sin, must take the step of speaking directly to that person, preferably in private (Matthew 18:15). We cannot triangulate by asking others to do what we must do, which is take the initial step of speaking directly to the person in question to lovingly confront them about their sin. As this gentle confrontation takes place, misunderstandings can be cleared up and heartfelt confession and repentance will bring the end of the matter. To further reflect on this point, see the *Faith Communication Covenant (above)*.

Second Step When Necessary

Where this initial step is rebuffed, in obedience to Christ we will then pursue the second step, which is to speak with the person again but with one or two witnesses (Matthew 18:16). It would be most helpful at this point if one or both of the witnesses were an elder familiar with biblical church discipline. As more people become aware of the communication taking place (in this case, the witnesses), extra care must be taken to avoid gossip about the parties involved and to protect both their individual reputations and the reputation of the body of Christ. Also, caution and care must be observed, that evidence be presented fairly and lovingly in the pursuit of truth, righteousness, and helpful correction. Our hope is that this second step will lead to repentance, reconciliation, and restoration, so that believers are strengthened in their walk with Christ and the church family protected from harm.

When Additional Steps Are Needed

In the case where neither of the preceding steps results in satisfactory settling of the issues, where there is not reconciliation, restoration, and righteousness by grace established, a third step is in order and needed. At this point, the Elder Council will be informed and further efforts toward repentance and restoration will be undertaken. However, if the elders deem it necessary, the church will be informed of the unrepentant sin (Matthew 18:17; read also I Corinthians 5) and the need to remove the person from membership. The elders will have discretion concerning the setting, nature, and

timing of this public communication with the Faith Baptist body (1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 3:10; I Corinthians 5:6-7). The elders will also carefully instruct the body as to their duties in communicating with and showing love to the person out of fellowship. The elders will exercise great care to carry out this duty in all humility, submission to Scripture, and meekness (Philippians 2:3-4).

When Immediate Action Is Required

There may be occasions when the Elder Council, in order to protect the church body and its reputation, must take immediate action. In such cases, the elders will act in accordance with the spirit and intent of this policy, with the goal of repentance and restoration in the life of the person in question. The elders will also act in accordance with public laws which may apply, such as notification of law enforcement officials when sinful actions may be against the law. In all cases, it will be the prayerful, careful desire of the elders to act with wisdom and biblical faithfulness as each situation requires.

Our Shared Responsibility

As we hope this policy makes clear, the responsibility to maintain the spiritual health and vitality of the church is in the hands of every member, not only its elders. Let us agree that we will begin the process by going to the person in sin, knowing that at this first, initial encounter the Holy Spirit may well bring brokenness, confession, and the application of the gospel.

Initiated January 2013

Faith Baptist Fellowship's Statement on Christian Marriage and Sexuality

Based on our affirmation that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God with supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct, and our affirmation that Christians should live to the glory of God, (2 Tim 3:16 [1], 2 Peter 1:20-21 [2], 1 Corinthians 10:31 [3])

WE BELIEVE the following about Christian Marriage and Sexuality:

1. The Holy Scriptures reveal God's creation, plan, and will for Christian marriage to be a life-long covenant between one man and one woman. It is a sacred institution ordained by God for the happiness of mankind and the propagation of the human race and the foundation of the family unit. It is both a physical and spiritual union which a man and a woman may enter for the glory of God. (Genesis 2:21-24 [4], Matthew 19:4-6 [5], Ephesians 5:15, 21-33 [6])
2. God's plan is for sexual behavior to be lovingly expressed within Christian marriage. All other sexual behavior, whether heterosexual or homosexual in nature, is immoral and God calls his people to refrain from immoral behavior.
(Leviticus 18:22 [7] Romans 1:21-27 [8], 1 Cor. 6:9-11 [9], 1 Timothy 1:8-11 [10], 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 [11])
3. Sexual immorality, as well as every sin, is the result of the fall of humanity into a sinful condition which pervades every person's nature. (Romans 5:12 [12], Romans 3:10-12, 23 [13])
4. There is hope of freedom from the sin of sexual immorality through faith in Jesus Christ, who offers healing and forgiveness by the power of the Holy Spirit.
(1 Corinthians 15:3 [14], 2 Corinthians 3:17 [15], 2 Corinthians 5:17 [16], 1 John 1:9 [17], Romans 8:26 [18])
5. The Holy Spirit leads an individual through the process of sanctification, during which the individual recognizes the immoral behavior as sin, renounces that behavior, and embraces a biblical sexual lifestyle. (1 Corinthians 6:11 [19], Acts 3:18-19 [20], Rom 12:1-2 [21])
6. All persons have been created in the image of God and thus we must respond with compassion and patience for those struggling to be free from sexual sin. Furthermore, we believe any hateful harassment or attacks of persons struggling with sexual sin is not acceptable and must be repudiated. (Genesis 1:26-27 [22], 1 John 4:20-21 [23], Ephesians 4:1-3 [24])
7. Respect for persons struggling with sexual sin involves honest, reasoned sharing of biblical truths concerning the immorality and liability of their behavior. We also recognize that endorsing behavior, which the Bible identifies as sin, endangers persons, and dishonors God.
(Romans 10:14-15 [25], 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 [26], Romans 6:23 [27])

Therefore, based on these beliefs, Faith Baptist Fellowship resolves that WE SHALL:

1. Be committed to teach and instruct our membership in the biblical model of marriage being between one man and one woman including roles and responsibilities of both husband and wife.
2. Require premarital counseling based on, and agreement with the above guiding beliefs and principles for marriages to be performed on Church property.
3. Not allow any marriage or marriage-like ceremony between two persons of the same gender on Church property. Furthermore, no employee or member of the Church shall conduct such a ceremony as this is contrary to Christian Marriage as ordained by God.
4. Not allow anyone sustaining an unrepentant sexual lifestyle or who believes and teaches contrary to the biblical position as outlined above to hold a leadership, staff, or teaching position within the Church.

Verses:

1. **1 Corinthians 10:31** **(ESV)** 31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
2. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** **(ESV)** 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
3. **2 Peter 1:20-21** **(ESV)** 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
4. **Genesis 2:21-24** **(ESV)** 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
5. **Matthew 19:4-6** **(ESV)** 4 He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."
6. **Ephesians 5:15, 21-33** **(ESV)** 15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, … 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. … 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.
7. **Leviticus 18:22** **(ESV)** 22 You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.
8. **Romans 1:21-27** **(ESV)** 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.
9. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** **(ESV)** 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.
10. **1 Timothy 1:8-11** **(ESV)** 8 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, 10 the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, 11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

11. **1 Corinthians 6:18-20 (ESV)** 18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

12. **Romans 5:12 (ESV)** 12 Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

13. **Romans 3:10-12, 23 (ESV)** 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God. 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." … 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

14. **1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV)** 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,

15. **2 Corinthians 3:17 (ESV)** 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

16. **2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)**
17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

17. **1 John 1:9 (ESV)** 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

18. **Romans 8:26 (ESV)** 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

19. **1 Corinthians 6:11 (ESV)** 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

20. **Acts 3:18-19 (ESV)** 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,

21. **Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)** 1 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. 2 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.

22. **Genesis 1:26-27 (ESV)** 26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

23. **1 John 4:20-21 (ESV)** 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

24. **Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)** 1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

25. **Romans 10:14-15 (ESV)** 14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

26. **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 (ESV)** 7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,

27. **Romans 6:23 (ESV)** 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"SERIOUSLY JOYFUL AND JOYFULLY SERIOUS"

Faith Baptist Fellowship Philosophy of Corporate Worship

Our hope is that the tone of every worship gathering (and every aspect of every gathering) will be ***seriously joyful and joyfully serious.*** We strive to be joyfully serious rather than flippant or light or merely chipper at the wonderful realities of the gospel, the deep truths of the Christian faith, and the shared experience of worship each week. But we are not morose. Rather, we are serious about our joy in Jesus Christ and in one another, and desire to encourage and edify and strengthen one another to "rejoice always" because the Lord is at hand (Philippians 4:4-7).

PRESCRIBED ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP

God alone determines how he is to be worshiped. Therefore, we must look to the Scriptures to guide us in our corporate worship. As we gather each Lord's Day we incorporate into our corporate worship the elements we see prescribed in the New Testament.

THE WORD READ & PREACHED - At Faith, we are committed to the reading and faithful preaching of the word. During our gathered worship you'll hear the word read many times. And when the word is preached, one of the pastors or other qualified men will read a portion of God's word and then expound upon it, seeking to clarify the meaning of the text and apply it to our lives today.

THE WORD PRAYED - Part of our offense against the spiritual forces that threaten our faith is prayer. We believe that God himself, in his word, has given us the substance of our prayers. During our gathered worship we devote time to prayer, during which we adore and praise God, give him thanks, confess our sins, intercede on behalf others, and petition him to meet our needs.

THE WORD SUNG - We love to sing at Faith and enjoy a mix of theologically rich songs both old and new, accompanied by a variety of instruments in our gathered worship. As we worship together, some people raise their hands and clap while others prefer a more reflective response. We welcome and value both of these as Biblical expressions in corporate worship.

THE WORD SEEN - The ordinances of baptism and The Lord's Supper (or Communion) are instituted by Christ and given to the church to be carried out corporately, symbolically reenacting the gospel message of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. We partake in the Lord's Supper the first Sunday of each month and administer the ordinance of baptism as the need arises.

FORMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES IN GATHERED WORSHIP

Forms and circumstances are *how* we carry out the prescribed elements of worship. These include aspects such as how we order the service, when we gather, how long our services are, what instruments we use, when we stand or sit, etc.. While forms and circumstances of corporate worship are not specifically prescribed in the Bible, they should be guided and informed by Scriptural principles and employed with wisdom so as to create and environment most conducive to observing the elements of worship. The following principles guide us in our gathered worship.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

We Seek to Glorify The Triune God
Everything that the Christian does, including participation in corporate worship, is ultimately for God and his glory. The apostle Paul says, *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* (1 Corinthians 10:31) Making much of God and his glory is what ultimately satisfies, encourages and stirs the heart of the believer to love God and others and do good works. All elements, forms, and circumstances of corporate worship must have the triune God's glory as their ultimate goal.

We Seek to Exalt Christ
Corporate worship serves as a public confession of the truth about Jesus Christ. He is the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). He died for our sins and was raised from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He is highly exalted and has been given the name that is above every name so that every knee will bow to him and confess him as Lord (Philippians 2:9-11). In corporate worship we confess these truths and more as we read, hear, sing, pray and see the word.

We Seek to Be Spirit-Led
The Holy Spirit is ultimately the one who "leads worship." The kind of worshipers that God is seeking are those who worship him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). We depend on the Holy Spirit to make our worship "Spiritual," genuine, and rooted in truth.

We Seek to Proclaim The Gospel
The Gospel is the most glorious news ever proclaimed. It reminds us of God's holy character and our desperate sinfulness and his love and provision of grace through Jesus Christ. This calls us to respond with gratitude and praise for what Christ has done for us and depend on God for his ongoing grace to grow in the knowledge of his will and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. In every aspect of our corporate worship we seek to keep this gospel message central.

We Seek to Teach, Admonish, and Stir Up One Another
God's will is for us to be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3); that is, progressively transformed to be more like Christ. In our corporate worship we aim to teach and admonish one another (Colossians 3:16) and stir one another up to love and good works (Hebrews 12:14). Genuine worship of a Holy God will result in our transformation into greater holiness.

We Seek Maximum Participation in Our Singing
Scripture commands us to be filled with the Spirit and address one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with our hearts to God (Ephesians 5:18-19). Therefore, our aim in the singing portion of our worship is vibrant, sincere, congregational worship in song. Everyone is part of the "Worship Team."

We Seek Unity Across The Generations
God values generational continuity in the church (Psalm 145:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is celebrated in all its reconciling and unifying power when many generations participate in the church's corporate worship. We see this when young people show honor to those of older generations (Leviticus 19:32) and people of older generations do not look down on those who are young (1 Timothy 4:12).

We Seek to Balance The Old And New

Our faith has a long and rich history. We can greatly benefit from the centuries of faithful worshipers who eloquently mingled clear doctrine with deep affection for Jesus Christ. Historic songs, confessions, creeds and other writings remind us that God has been faithful to and has preserved his church for centuries. At the same time God desires that we express our praises to him today and freshly engage our faith as we sing, pray, and worship him (Psalm 33:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:6, 149:1). When ordering our worship and determining the forms and circumstances, wise consideration of language, source, music styles, etc., that represent current cultural expressions should be balanced with historical continuity and biblical faithfulness.

We Seek to Do All Things in Love

Scripture calls us to do all things in love (1 Corinthians 16:14). We acknowledge that it is loving to worship using styles and forms that are maximally edifying for the entire congregation and a cross-generational church. At the same time, love demands that we not seek our own (1 Corinthians 13:5), but surrender even our most deeply cherished preferences to build up others (1 Corinthians 14:26). Not every song or form a of worship element will be everyone's favorite or personal preference. But something that may not be one believer's preference likely resonates in a deep and meanful way with another brother or sister in Christ. Every believer in the church is asked to apply the gospel and regard others as more important with respect to style preferences (Philippians 2:3).

THE DANVERS STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

The Danvers Statement has been adopted by the elders of Faith Baptist Fellowship and serves as the standard of what our church holds to regarding biblical complementarianism.

The Danvers Statement summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Purposes

Recognizing our own abiding sinfulness and fallibility, and acknowledging the genuine evangelical standing of many who do not agree with all of our convictions, nevertheless, moved by the preceding observations and by the hope that the noble Biblical vision of sexual complementarity may yet win the mind and heart of Christ's church, we engage to pursue the following purposes:

1. To study and set forth the Biblical view of the relationship between men and women,especially in the home and in the church.
2. To promote the publication of scholarly and popular materials representing this view.
3. To encourage the confidence of lay people to study and understand for themselves the teaching of Scripture, especially on the issue of relationships between men and women.
4. To encourage the considered and sensitive application of this Biblical view in the appropriate spheres of life.
5. And thereby

   —to bring healing to persons and relationships injured by an inadequate grasp of God's will concerning manhood and womanhood,

   —to help both men and women realize their full ministry potential through a true understanding and practice of their God-given roles,

   —and to promote the spread of the gospel among all peoples by fostering a Biblical wholeness in relationships that will attract a fractured world.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).

   a. In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.

   b. In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

1. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

2. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.

   a. In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

   b. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

3. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).

4. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

5. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).

6. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

FAITH BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP
MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE

We are excited that you are considering joining Faith Baptist Fellowship as a covenant member. Prayerfully fill out this form and answer the questions on the back. This will help guide the interview process and hopefully affirm your decision to join Faith as a member.

I. Contact Information

Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: (C)_____ (W) _____ **(H)** _____

Email: _____ **Other Email:** _____

II. Family Information

Marital Status: (circle any that apply) Single / Married / Divorced / Widowed

Name of Spouse: _____

Please list the names of any children and their ages.

Name: _____ **Age:** _____
Name: _____ **Age:** _____
Name: _____ **Age:** _____
Name: _____ **Age:** _____
Name: _____ **Age:** _____
Name: _____ **Age:** _____

III. Membership Preparation

Have you taken our ***Faith Foundations*** *class?* ☐**Yes**

☐**No** *Have you read the following documents (check all that apply)?*

☐ **Affirmation of Faith**

☐ **Communication Covenant**

☐ **Bylaws**

☐ **Discipline Policy**

☐ **Membership Covenant**

Do you have any questions or concerns about any of these? ☐Yes ☐No
If yes, please explain below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Have you been baptized by immersion as a believer? ☐Yes ☐No
If not, are you interested in being baptized here at Faith? ☐Yes ☐No

If you were baptized at another church, please list the name of the church and the date (or approximate date) of your baptism.

Church name:_____ Date of Baptism: _____

Are you currently listed as a member of another church? ☐Yes ☐No
If yes, what is the name of the church and why are you looking to transfer your membership?

Church name:_____

Reason for Transfer:_____

_____

IV. Your Christian Faith

THE GOSPEL

Please explain the gospel in your own words:

_____

_____

_____

_____

YOUR TESTIMONY

Briefly explain how you came to know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

YOUR SPIRITUAL WALK

What do you think God is doing in your life right now?

_____

_____

_____

YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

What do you believe are your spiritual gifts and how do you feel led to use them to serve the body at Faith?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Are you currently part of a Faith Group? ☐*Yes* ☐*No*
If not, are you interested in joining one? ☐*Yes* ☐*No*

If there anything that you would like discuss during your membership interview that is not addressed in this questionnaire, please let us know below:

_____

_____

_____

V. Next Steps

Please return this completed questionnaire and membership covenant (next page) into the church office. An elder will contact you to set up a time for your membership interview. Most interviews are conducted with at least two elders/pastors present. Following your interview, should you wish to continue pursuing membership, and upon elder approval, you will be publicly acknowledged and recommended to the church body for membership. This will take place during a Sunday morning service or other church meeting. Following a congregational vote, you will be welcomed to Faith Baptist Fellowship as a member!